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OR,

LECTURES FOR THE TIMES.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE elder Disraeli says, that "a Preface is as essential to put the reader into good humour, as a good prologue is to a play, or a fine symphony to an opera." The Italians characterize it as a whet to the appetite—as sauce to a book. In the present instance, a few explanatory observations may be thought seasonable, if not strictly essential, and be received as not altogether unsuitable "sauce" to the somewhat varied dishes set before them.

Nine out of the ten papers of which this little volume consists, were delivered in the form of Lectures, in various towns of Scotland and England, at the request of literary and religious societies. They were composed during the leisure hours of two winters, and are now committed to the press, in the hope that their perusal may induce some young men, who have a little spare time on their hands, to seek knowledge and the purest pleasure in the shady walks of lite-

ature. The essays do not pretend to be exhaustive; my desire was simply to be suggestive, to throw out hints stimulative to thought and study. Nor do they lay any claim to great originality; on the contrary, they will be found based very much on a profound belief in the truth of the saying, that "the wisdom of the wise and the experience of ages may be preserved by quotation." Whilst writing, I felt myself constantly reminded, that the idea which I was about to commit to paper had been far more felicitously expressed by some master-mind in English literature, and on every such occasion I adopted the practice which Cicero and Addison did not disdain. At the risk of having this unpretending work styled a compilation, I have chosen to avail myself as much as possible of the help afforded to the argument by authority and experience, and without scruple have endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the sentiments expressed by the striking language and ready wit of other men.

OLDEN TIMES.



It is curious to observe how many sages and moralists—to say nothing of literary men and poets—have in all ages of the world's history mourned over the degeneracy of the times in which they lived. Greek and Roman writers have handed down to us eloquent descriptions of the cloudless skies, the rich harvests, the extreme old age, the superior health, strength, and freedom from corroding cares, supposed to have been enjoyed by ancestors of theirs; and we have heard Coleridge in our own day descanting on the sunk condition of the world, given up, as he deemed it, to false beliefs, materialistic theories, schemes based on insincerity, and religions devoid of heart and soul.

The beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed a remarkable display of erudition; and yet we find authors who flourished at that period bewailing the decay, if not the extinction, of learning, and prophesying the speedy approach of a still more lamentable state of society, when men of letters

would cease altogether to be esteemed. Nearly four hundred years after the death of Christ, we find Ambrose, the great archbishop of Milan, struggling with this absurd reverence for antiquity, in his endeavours to prevent the Roman empire from lapsing into Paganism; and not a single generation has since passed away without beholding men like him, of faith and foresight, engaged in a similar conflict.

"People," says Macaulay, in his essay on William Pitt, "have, in all ages, been in the habit of talking about the good old times of their ancestors, and the degeneracy of their contemporaries. This is in general mere cant. But in 1756 it was something more. At this time appeared Brown's 'Estimate,' a book now remembered only by the allusions in Cowper's 'Table Talk,' and in Burke's 'Letters on a Regicide Peace.' It was universally read, admired, and believed. The author fully convinced his readers that they were a race of cowards and scoundrels, — that nothing could save them, — that they were on the point of being enslaved by their enemies, and that they richly deserved their fate. Such were the speculations to which ready credence was given at the outset of the most glorious war in which England had ever been engaged."

There seems, indeed, a natural tendency in the human mind towards lamentations of this kind; it can be traced down through the literature of every century, from the martial odes of Greece to the newspapers of Britain. With poets it has always

been a favourite theme. Listen to Spenser in the "Fairie Queene:"—

"So oft as I with state of present time
The image of the antique world compare,
When—as man's age was in his freshest prime,
And the first blossome of faire vertue bare;
Such odds I find 'twixt those, and these which are,
As that, through long continuance of his course,
Me seems the world has quite run out of square
From the first point of his appointed source;
And being once amisse grows daily worse and worse."

Or to Sir Walter Scott in the "Bridal of Triermain:"—

"The attributes of those high days
Now only live in minstrel lays;
For Nature, now exhausted, still
Was then profuse of good and ill.
Strength was gigantic, valour high,
And wisdom soar'd beyond the sky."

Every one is familiar with Byron's lines in the "Deformed Transformed," referring to one particular in which moderns have degenerated in comparison with their predecessors:—

"While man was in stature
As towers in our time,
The first-born of Nature,
And, like her, sublime."

"The dimensions of the pillars and of the stones on Mucklestane Moor," we are informed in the "Black Dwarf," "were often appealed to, as a proof of the superior stature and size of old women and geese in the days of other years by those praisers of

the past who hold the comfortable opinion of the gradual degeneracy of mankind." The researches of those interested in the study of old armoury have, however, proved to a demonstration that men have not diminished in size, whatever may have happened to the race of old women and geese. Some of the combatants at the Eglinton tournament found great difficulty in squeezing themselves into coats of mail which had been worn by valiant knights of old, and every keeper of such collections knows that the great majority of ordinary travellers would by no means suffer in comparison, as far as their physical frame is concerned, with the redoubtable Templars or warriors of an older date than they. On Tuesday, 13th April, 1773, as Boswell, with his usual minute accuracy, narrates, there was a dinner at General Oglethorpe's, when Goldsmith expatiated on the common topic that the race of our people was degenerated. Johnson promptly replied, "Sir, I doubt the fact; I believe there are as many tall men in England now as ever there were." It is very likely that the doctor could not have adduced conclusive reasons to substantiate his assertion; but his natural shrewdness supplied the place of actual knowledge, and few men who have given any attention to the subject do not now admit that he was right. My desire is to make a few suggestive remarks, with a view of showing that what is true in regard to the bodies of men is true also in regard to their minds and manners and morals; or rather, that while in the former respect they have not retrograded, in the latter they are gradually but

surely and perceptibly advancing ; that, to use the words of Bacon, " We are the true ancients ; what we call the antiquity of the world was but its infancy."

Strange to say, men may be found even in our own time who associate ignorance both with happiness and with virtue, who have a kind of superstitious horror of the spread of education among the labouring classes, and who are conscientiously of opinion that in proportion to the march of intelligence there will be an increase of vice and sorrow. Virtuous simplicity is the appellation which minds of this stamp bestow on that condition in which savages are, and from which peasants, in not a few civilized countries, are not many degrees removed. And yet how reasonable the conclusion of the poet in " Rasselas :"—" If nothing counteracts the natural consequence of learning, we grow more happy as our minds take a wider range!" *Causa laboris ignorantia est.* It is impossible for any one not infected with this unreasonable dread of the masses being instructed to contemplate without feelings of the deepest thankfulness and gratification the facilities now enjoyed for diffusing useful information throughout all ranks of society, and the efforts steadily and systematically made by enlightened benevolence to elevate mankind. In every part of Great Britain and the United States of America, besides other countries not so conspicuous for popular advancement, there are well-conducted magazines, serials, and newspapers ; public libraries, mechanics' institutions, and associations for promoting lectures ; books are becoming cheaper

every year, and most branches of science are within the reach of the working man. Indeed, the thirst for information is so great, and the means of gratifying it are so abundant, that, apart altogether from the *imaginary* dangers connected with the extension of knowledge to which I have before referred, there is a *real* danger of wicked and designing men turning the current into an unnatural channel, and thereby converting that desire for instruction which the Creator intends as a blessing into a curse. As this or any other nation advances in material prosperity and in general acquirements, new and more startling forms of evil will undoubtedly be developed, influences of the most pernicious nature will be brought to bear even in connection with praiseworthy movements, and good men will require to be more than ever vigilant and energetic, lest the citadel of truth be stormed with weapons which in their hands might have rendered it impregnable. In this righteous cause there is something for every man to do ; each of us can handle a musket, or use a pickaxe, or light a match ; individual exertion is the secret of successful defence, as well as the mainspring of progress ; be it ours, in the words of Milton, to "gain reinforcement from hope," and let the motto on our banners be "*Excelsior*."

" All are architects of Fate,
Working in the walls of time ;"

and all have a post of honour which it would be ignominious to desert in the moment of conflict in

presence of the foe. With due precautions, however, the result of the battle never can be doubtful; the wise and good among our ancestors had no means of reaching and leavening the masses such as we possess. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson to Sir Adam Fergusson, "the mass of both Greeks and Romans were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers." And even since Dr. Johnson's time what an advance has been made; how many thousand copies of newspapers are now sold for one that met with a purchaser in the year 1773! The state of education among the upper classes not very long anterior to that date may be inferred from a story told of the Duchess of Bolton, who is said, when Whiston foretold the destruction of the world within three years, to have avowed her intention of escaping the common fate by going to China. This anecdote forcibly illustrates another remark of Dr. Johnson's,—*"In ancient times a peer was as ignorant as any one else. He would have been angry to have it thought he could write his name. Men in ancient times dared to stand forth with a degree of ignorance with which nobody would now dare to stand forth."* The decadence of superstition is of itself a convincing proof of advancing intelligence. A very few years have elapsed since it was reckoned no disgrace to the most commanding intellects to believe in astrology and alchemy; in 1716 a woman and her daughter were hanged at Hun-

tingdon for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm by pulling off their stockings and making a lather of soap; in 1718 the sheriff depute of Caithness had an old woman executed as a witch, the principal charge brought against her being that she had used a lame daughter as a pony in her excursions to join the devil's sabbath; and until a comparatively recent period the many credited the dances of fairies in the moonlight, the orgies held by wizards in deep dells among the hemlocks, the exploits of mermaids, and the existence of supernatural beings in every forest, grove, and well. But "science has since withdrawn from creation's face the veil of enchantment;" cheap literature has deprived superstition of its terrors as well as "its lovely visions." Knowledge has made formidable inroads into the domain of imagination.

" Even the last lingering phantom of the brain,
The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again."

The fact is, that unreasonable beliefs and fanatical sentiments can never seriously influence a people devoted to the study of physical laws; the workshop, the mill, and the foundry are not suitable nurseries for superstitions of any sort; Manchester and the nineteenth century have little sympathy with the priest, the fortuneteller, or the admirer of what Edie Ochiltree calls "the auld times of rugging and riving through the hale country,—when it was ilka ane for himsel', and God for us a',—when nae man wanted property if he had strength to tak it, or had it langer

than he had power to keep it." Pascal, a very profound thinker and observer, says that not only does every individual daily advance in knowledge, but that men collectively make a constant progress, the old age of the universal man not being the period next to his birth, but that farthest removed from it, the ancients being indeed novices in all things. Exactly similar is the reasoning of Glanvil in his "Scepsis Scientifica," quoted by Mr. Hallam in the third volume of the "Literature of Europe:"—"Now, if we inquire," he remarks, "the reason why the mathematics and mechanic arts have so much got the start in growth of other sciences, we shall find it probably resolved into this as one considerable cause, that their progress hath not been retarded by that reverential awe of former discoveries which hath been so great a hindrance to theoretical improvements. For, as the noble Lord Verulam hath noted, we have a mistaken apprehension of antiquity, calling that so which in truth is the world's nonage.—*Antiquitas sæculi est juvenus mundi.*"

If we recall to our minds how short are the periods which have elapsed since men of genius have suffered grievous penalties for unfolding to us the first germs of what have since become great discoveries, we shall be able to form a vivid idea of the progressive improvement of the human race in knowledge. Jordano Bruno, in the seventeenth century, taught that the stars are suns shining by their own light, and that each had revolving planets, and death was the punishment awarded to one teaching such audacious heresy.

One hundred years later Solomon de Caus was imprisoned as a madman in France for annoying the Cardinal de Richelieu by insisting that he could navigate ships, and propel carriages by the steam of boiling water. We all know the persecution endured by Galileo in Italy for announcing the true theory of the earth's motion, and by Harvey in England for discovering the circulation of the blood. Since then what gigantic strides have been made in science and invention! Steam-carriages are moving to and fro over every civilized country as freely as the birds of the air; on every ocean and navigable river steamships are refuting the old adage,—

“The king said sail,
But the wind said no;”

iron has been made to float, spinning and weaving have become the work of machines, and, greatest of all, the ends of the earth are being brought together by the electric telegraph. Imagine the astonishment of a Tyrian merchant-prince could he rise from the tomb and spend a day among the manufactories of Bradford or the docks of Liverpool;—of a Lacedæmonian admiral could he gaze but for a moment on a fleet of screw three-deckers at Spithead;—of Hannibal could he witness the Scots Greys embarking for India on board the Himalaya;—of Columbus could he stand on the quays of New York and speak to the Queen of England by means of electricity!

“A modern shopkeeper's house,” says Macaulay, “is as well furnished as the house of a considerable

merchant in Anne's reign. Very plain people now wear finer cloth than Beau Fielding or Beau Edgeworth could have procured in Queen Anne's reign. We would rather trust to the apothecary of a modern village than to the physician of a large town in Anne's reign. A modern boarding-school miss could tell the most learned professor of Anne's reign some things in geography, astronomy, and chemistry which would surprise him." Well might Dr. Johnson roar out to Lord Monboddo, who was bothering him about the virtues of our ancestors, "No, no, my Lord, we are as strong as they, and a great deal wiser." I need not travel beyond the bounds of my native Scotland, nor go farther back than a single century. What a marvellous change for the better in the state of its population,—peer, landed proprietor, tradesman, and peasant—since the highland clans rose to assert the rights of the Pretender, and fought for tyranny and priestcraft on the field of Culloden! It humbly appears to me, that the signs of the times point to a new and brighter era for mankind, in which the mental shall triumph over the physical, and every people shall be taught in trumpet-tones that knowledge indeed is power. For centuries might has mastered right,—popes and emperors and standing armies have dictated laws to Europe, and through Europe to the world. Does it not seem as if a great revolution had begun?—are there not symptoms of the dense black cloud uplifting?—what was the first message which the lightning carried *from* a free people *to* a free people across the Atlantic; was it

not "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men" ?

Turn we from the contemplation of the improvement that has taken place in intellectual and scientific knowledge to that which is everywhere apparent in the social condition of men. I shall never forget the first impression produced upon my mind by a visit to the disintombed city of Pompeii. It was one of surprise, that a great people like the Romans should have been contented with rooms so small, houses so ill-ventilated, streets so narrow, and shops so inconvenient. No tradesman in the Europe of the nineteenth century would agree to live in the mansion of its quæstor; no crinolined lady of 1858 could get in at the doors. I can scarcely realize, even yet, that Augustus and Cicero and Virgil enjoyed so few comforts as these memorials of their times lead us to suppose. But, after all, it must have been so. "The ancients," remarks Gibbon, "were destitute of many of the conveniences of life which have been invented or improved by the progress of industry; and the plenty of glass and linen has diffused more real comforts among the modern nations of Europe than the senators of Rome could derive from all the refinements of pompous or sensual luxury." Let me adduce one or two facts in illustration of our superior advantages in this respect. "I have sometimes seen," says Peter of Blois, in a curious letter relating to the times of Henry II., "wine so full of dregs put before noblemen, that they were compelled rather to filter than to drink it, with their eyes shut and their teeth

closed, with loathing and retching ; bread like lead, full of bran and unbaked." " Out of seventy-three years," we are told by Mr. Hallam, " the reigns of Hugh Capet and his two successors in France, forty-eight were years of famine." " The Pictorial History of England" enumerates no fewer than seventeen famines between the years 1070 and 1137. " Chimneys," observes the author of the " Middle Ages of England," " were unknown, except perhaps a vent bearing that appearance in the kitchen." Fitzstephen tells us, when recording the munificence of Thomas à Becket, that he " caused his servants to cover the floor of his dining-room with clean straw or hay every morning in winter, and green branches of trees in summer, that those guests who could not find room at table might sit on the ground without spoiling their clothes." Sir Walter Scott, in " Guy Mannerling," quotes the following passage from Fletcher of Saltoun : " There are at this day in Scotland (besides a great many poor families very meanly provided for by the church boxes, with others who, by living on bad food, fall into various diseases) two hundred thousand people begging from door to door ;" . . . " and in all times there have been about one hundred thousand of those vagabonds, who have lived without any regard or subjection either to the laws of the land, or even to those of God and nature." A careful study and comparison of all that has come down to us in regard to the food, dwellings, and clothing of our ancestors, will satisfy every candid man that their condition was infinitely worse than ours, and with the

facts of the case before him he will be at no loss to account for the gradual lengthening of people's lives in this country for several generations past. There can be no doubt that the masses of the people now enjoy a far more nourishing diet; that they live in houses contrasted with which those of the Elizabethan age were but sheds; that they owe to the manufacturing system luxuries in the shape of clothing which would have amazed their great-grandfathers; and that in sickness they have better medical advice, and therefore we need not wonder when indisputable bills of mortality tell us that they live longer. Can any man calculate the addition which the inventions of the steam-engine and the mariner's compass alone have made to the comforts of the human race? The introduction of tea as an article of general consumption of itself has been a great boon to the humbler classes. In 1678 the East-India Company imported 4,700 lbs. of it, but that supply so overstocked the market, that scarcely any reached this country for several years thereafter, and it was not until nearly a century subsequent to that period that it began to be used in any quantity. Now, between two and three pounds per head per annum are used by the population of Great Britain.

From a consideration of the social condition of the people in times past, as compared with the present age, the transition is easy to a review of their manners. And if our working men now daily enjoy fare which would have been reckoned luxurious by men of superior station in the reigns of the Tudors; if shop-

keepers in 1858 occupy rooms which nobles in 1658 would have envied; if our domestic servants and factory girls wear on Sundays apparel which would have excited the admiration of duchesses in Elizabeth's anterooms,—I submit that the improvement is still more remarkable as far as refinement is concerned. "We can't tell," says Mr. Thackeray, in his "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century," "you would not bear to be told, the whole truth regarding these men and manners. You could no more suffer in a British drawing-room under the reign of Queen Victoria a fine gentleman or a fine lady of Queen Anne's time, or hear what they had heard or said, than you would receive an ancient Briton. It is as one reads about savages that one contemplates the wild ways, the barbarous feasts, the terrific pastimes of the men of pleasure of that age." Within the last hundred years there has been a marked and most satisfactory change in the manners and morals of all classes of society. Among persons who have no regular occupation, and consequently much leisure time, a love of reading, the study of scientific and political subjects, and an interest in the institutions of their neighbourhood, have in a great measure taken the place of pleasures of a more sensual and boisterous nature; while even the profligate among the higher orders are compelled, out of deference to public opinion, to conceal their vices as far as possible from the world. A loose life is now reckoned an obstacle which it is difficult to surmount in the pursuit of a leading position either in Parlia-

ment, in the council-chamber, or around the throne; cabinet ministers can no longer allow their mistresses to sit at the head of their tables, or occupy a place in their opera-boxes; senators of prominence are not seen at gaming-tables or cockfights; and Queen Victoria receives at her court no such ladies of quality as are described by Fielding and Smollett. One, indeed, can scarcely read of the unblushing immorality and the grossness of the vice which stalked abroad in England a century ago without a shudder. Even men of family, education, and abilities acted in many respects like satyrs, making no effort to cover their dissoluteness with that grace and gilding which distinguish the licentiousness practised on the Continent; and this after the powerful pen of Addison had effected a partial reformation by exposing, with a force of well-directed ridicule which has seldom been equalled, the more astounding wickedness of the preceding age, and by proving that there was no necessary connection between vice and genius,—that, on the contrary, talents could not be devoted to a higher purpose than that of promoting the cause of morality and religion. As for the state of things in the palaces of the Stuarts, one can scarcely credit the avowed profligacy of both men and women, the drunken orgies in which even noble ladies constantly indulged, and the stories of intrigues, robberies, and murders which have been handed down to us,—deeds worthy of the camarillas that surrounded the worst of the popes, or the most depraved emperors of Rome. “Times, to which men sometimes appeal,”

says Mr. Hallam, "as to a golden period, were far inferior in every moral comparison to those in which we are thrown." Apart, too, from vicious practices, the habits of our ancestors, we gather from a variety of sources, were such as would shock most people now-a-days; men ate and drank like animals, using their fingers as forks; they wore untanned leather, and many of their household usages resembled more those of the Khirgis or the Esquimaux than those of the labouring population in the present age. Even within the recollection of the living, customs savouring of barbarism were universally respected which have now gone completely out of vogue. Sir Jonah Barrington relates in his *Memoirs*, that "previous to the Union, during the time of a disputed election in Dublin, it was no unusual thing for three-and-twenty duels to be fought in a day." In our time, no one dreams of such folly except the lower class of American slave-owners, and the scarcely less-civilized subalterns in Continental armies. I may mention, also, amongst other symptoms of progress, the greater temperance in regard to spirituous liquors which now prevails among all classes. Fifty years ago, when a party of gentlemen met at dinner, it was no uncommon thing for the host to lock the door and put the key in the fire; and if we go back a few years further, we find it the established and almost invariable practice at such entertainments for the bottles to go round, or the punch-bowl to be replenished,—

"Till man after man the contention gave o'er,
Outstretch'd on the rushes that strew'd the hall-floor."

Bacchanalian orgies of this description were sometimes kept up for days together, with blazing fires, lighted candles, and closed shutters. They are now nearly unknown in this circle of society, and the humbler classes, who imitated their wealthier neighbours in their drunken habits, are now beginning to imitate their increased sobriety. If Andrew Fair-service, who lamented the diminished size of pint-stoups after the Union, could look up from his grave, he would find the times still more degenerate. There is likewise much less cruelty in the present age. The northern tribes who overran the declining Roman Empire were guilty of massacres and horrible tortures which historians can scarcely find words to describe. Gibbon characterizes the crusaders who followed Peter the Hermit as "savage beasts, alike destitute of humanity and reason;" and we are credibly informed that seventy-two thousand persons fell in England by the hands of the executioner during the reign of Henry the Eighth alone. How much, too, has recently been done for the abolition and the mitigation of the evils of slavery ! Great Britain has manumitted her negroes ; Russia is taking steps towards the enfranchisement of her serfs ; Brazil is enforcing the laws against the importation of Africans ; and in the southern states of America, there are signs on the part of "the domestic institution" of that convulsive energy which immediately precedes death. The same may be said of war ; not that a millennial period of perpetual peace has arrived, or that lethal weapons will no longer be required ; but that civilization, and

commerce, and Christianity are gradually weaning men from those fierce, restless, lawless habits which originate military expeditions. There is evidently less desire for conquest or unreasonable aggression; and science, by the invention of terrible instruments of destruction, has, paradoxical as it may appear, rendered conflicts both less bloody and less prolonged. Nor in this survey can we forget Christian missions, the very idea of which is of a recent date, and which even good men among our ancestors would have regarded as Quixotic and Utopian. "We can conceive," says Dr. Chalmers, in his "Astronomical Discourses," "a still loftier flight of humanity,—a man, the aspiring of whose heart for the good of man knows no limitations,—whose longings and whose conceptions on this subject overleap all the barriers of geography,—who, looking on himself as a brother of the species, links every spare energy which belongs to him with the cause of its amelioration,—who can embrace within the grasp of his ample desires the whole family of mankind,—and who, in obedience to a heaven-born movement of principle within him, separates himself to some big and busy enterprise which is to tell on the moral destinies of the world." Such an enterprise is that in which thousands of zealous men are now engaged among the ragged and squalid population of our own cities, in India, in Africa, in China, on West Indian plantations, under the plantains and bananas of the Pacific Isles. They consider imperative the command of their Master,—
"Go ye and preach the Gospel unto every creature."

Knowing well the vast difficulty of the work, they still believe in ultimate success, and no thoughtful man who has studied the subject will doubt that the results have, all things taken into account, been quite commensurate with the means employed. Many mistakes have been committed, many improper agents have been used, many exaggerated statements have been issued, many individual schemes have utterly failed; but some facts remain which rebuke the scorner and puzzle the sceptic,—whole islands in the Society, the Georgian, the Hervey, and the Samoan groups, have embraced, not a nominal, but a real Christianity. Bechuana and Fingo villages have erected chapels and school-houses; churches exclusively composed of converts may be found in various parts of India; and among the negroes of Jamaica and Berbice the traveller may any Sunday mingle with congregations far better instructed and far more intelligent than any which have assembled for centuries under the dome of St. Peter's.

Much of the progress which has been lately made in science, in knowledge, in purity of morals, and in political freedom, may be attributed to the increased influence acquired by the middle class,—the intermediate order between the very rich and the labourers,—the men who have means and education enough to be entirely independent of the aristocracy, but who are not potent enough to lord it over others themselves.

were comparatively few in numbers and not of much account in former times; but in countries nowadays, merchants and mechanics,

farmers and tradesmen, are, to all intents and purposes, the governing power; their habits of thought, their mode of life and early training, favourable to the development of a sound judgment and a healthful unprejudiced moral tone, enable them to render invaluable service to every state governed on the principles of liberty. That cringing, obsequious spirit which pervaded the lower classes of society under the feudal system, and the remnants of which we still see in the excessive deference paid, especially in Scotland, to titled persons, is utterly opposed to the spirit of the present age. Men have learned to walk upright, to preserve their self-respect in any presence, and, as Dickens remarks, "the hands upon the clock of Time would require to be put back in order to restore the picturesque and faithful vulgar of a bygone age." Mr. Paget, in his "Travels in Hungary," relates a story of an old Transylvanian countess who used to lament that times were really changed,—peasants were no longer so respectful as they used to be; she "could remember walking to church on the backs of the peasants, who knelt down in the mud to allow her to pass over them without soiling her shoes." All this has passed away; as books circulate and schools multiply, as science opens up new fields to explore, as inventive genius brings different nations into immediate contact, the masses of every people will learn more and more that the "rank is but the guinea stamp," while the man, provided he upholds the dignity of his birthright, is the real solid gold.

If, in modern times, we have a more independent

political feeling, we have also an improved political morality. Ministers do not now give their supporters bank-notes in their napkins at dinners; government contractors cannot cheat the public with impunity in the face of day; the sums raised for the Exchequer find their way in thither without diminution; there are few sinecures reserved for the friends of the administration, and no forced loans or illegal exactions; it is becoming every year more difficult to induce members of the House of Commons to vote against their consciences, and no young statesman could, with any regard to his reputation and prospects, pursue a course as unprincipled as that which was taken by Pitt in his assaults on the Earl of Orford.

The law of progress is strikingly illustrated by the facts of geology, itself but recently admitted into the rank of the sciences, but destined to shed a flood of light on various departments of human knowledge. The first manifestations of organic life are found in the zoophytes and molluscs of the Silurian rocks. They were submarine creatures, pulpy and boneless, that from the bottom of the ocean stretched out their long suckers to seize their prey. To them succeeded the vertebrate fishes of the old red sandstone, and the Batrachian reptiles of the carboniferous era. In the Permian system, we find for the first time, traces of the saurians and of birds. An inspection of the superjacent oolite beds reveals to us fossils of the ichthyosaurus, the plesiosaurus, the iguanodon, and other marine and terrestrial monsters; and not until we come to the tertiary formations of clay,

limestone, marl, &c., do we meet with remains of quadruped mammals. Thousands of years subsequent to these deposits, at a comparatively recent period, man appeared. Step by step, ever advancing, the Creator furnished the world; and I believe that the same law of progressive improvement is in operation with respect to the mental, material, moral, and religious condition of mankind. Advancement is surely the universal rule.

Individual men may deteriorate and become corrupt; irregularity may be apparent in the growth of the race; part of the ground gained by painful effort in one age, may be lost in the next; one nation may have sunk while another was elevated; at one period Asia, at another Europe, may have led the van of civilization; there has been reaction and recoil, calamity and downfall, as well as progression, prosperity, and successful achievement:—but if we take a comprehensive view of society at considerable intervals, we shall not be left in doubt as to the fact of progress, or refuse to acquiesce in Gibbon's pleasing conclusion, "that every age of the world has increased and still increases, the real wealth,—the happiness, the knowledge, and the virtue of the human race." Amidst the decay of empires and the crash of thrones, amidst convulsions and bloody scenes, entailing an immense amount of suffering upon both individuals and nations, we cannot forget that a benign religion, humanizing and elevating in its influence, has gradually extended from an upper room in Jerusalem to most parts of the habitable

globe; that wars and revolutions, conquests and discoveries, have been rendered by an Unseen Hand subservient to its diffusion; that the treasury of knowledge is becoming fuller every year; and that the work of renovation, directed by an overruling Providence, ever goes on, though opposed more or less successfully in ten thousand ways, by cherished corruptions of the past.

If we look only at one particular phase of society in our own age, and compare it with another in the age immediately preceding, we may occasionally and naturally experience a sensation of retrogression; but if we compare the leading characteristics of centuries, we shall be delivered from every such dread. An unexpected manifestation of ignorance or superstition may shake our faith in progress, but that confidence will be restored when we remember that Sir Matthew Hale burnt witches, and Sir Thomas More tightened the rack.

SUPERSTITION.

It is almost as difficult succinctly to define the meaning of superstition, as it is to fix the etymology of the term. Scholars have in vain attempted to throw light on its derivation, and compilers of dictionaries precisely to explain it. It implies faith in what is contrary to reason; yet all irrational beliefs cannot be styled superstitious; it arises in many instances from the insufficient exercise of the understanding, yet it can by no means be laid to the charge of every man who is intellectually indolent. But it has invariably respect to Deity, to an unseen world, to a state of existence beyond the grave. It has its origin in low conceptions of God, in putting Him on a level, as it were, with His creatures, or with the inhabitants of a heathen Pantheon, in cherishing mean ideas of His moral attributes, government, and providence. It has, moreover, an intimate connection with the passions. Fear especially lies at the foundation of much of the superstition prevailing in the world. Dr. Johnson, indeed, explains the signifi-

cation of the word as "unnecessary fear or scruples in religion." Perhaps a better, because a more comprehensive definition, might be, "Ignorant credulity in religious matters." The superstitious man believes too much; he allows his imagination to override his understanding; he permits some particular emotion to exercise undue influence over his judgment; he forgets the dignity both of his Maker and of himself, and indulges in whims and fancies, involving mental irregularity, and a culpable application to wrong purposes of his natural powers.

Who can deny its influence? It is easier to change the form of government, or even the religion of a people, than to eradicate their superstitions. You may cover a country with schools and churches, railroads and telegraphs, workshops and mechanics' institutions, but, strange, wild beliefs still linger on the mountain sides, in lonely valleys, on unfrequented wastes; some nook is sure to escape the penetrating rays of science, some quiet village to preserve its faith in unearthly traditions of the past. It requires centuries for the leaven of knowledge thoroughly to permeate the masses of a nation; scarcely a Christian land but continues some Pagan practices to the present hour. Within a short distance of London, with its armies of philosophers and associations of every kind, may be found traces of customs which went out of vogue with the Tudors, and of religious notions altogether foreign to Christianity;—of superstitions as humiliating to human nature as any which exist in Siam or the New Hebrides. While we

connect continents by the electric cable and peer into the substance of comets, persons in our own neighbourhood believe in witchcraft and practise sorcery, and conjurors profitably pursue their trade. The Lord Chancellor Bacon said, "Imagination is next kin to miracle-working faith;" and in the nineteenth century there is no lack of impostors to take advantage of the credulous. We all know how difficult it is, even when our minds are enlightened, to get quit of superstitious ideas imbibed in our earliest years, in the cradle, or on the nurse's knee. They acquire a hold which reason can scarcely loosen; they twine themselves around our intellect like the ivy round the oak; they grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength, and often rush upon us in full force when we had flattered ourselves with having for ever got rid of them. If such be the case with people of education, whose mental faculties have been developed and trained, what can we expect of those who have comparatively few opportunities of acquiring knowledge? Need we be surprised in respect to them as Tasso says—

*"S'empie di mostri e di prodigi il cielo,
S'odon fremendo errar larve maligne."*

If the man of high intellectual culture is liable in certain spots and hours to be

"Touch'd by superstition's power,"

there is no cause for mourning over the ignorance of

the age because a servant-girl places confidence in a soothsayer, or a rustic believes in magic.

There is something very grand in the history of Joan of Arc. Her wild faith roused an entire people from their lethargy; every obstacle gave way before her enthusiasm, and as we see her riding at the head of the French chivalry, we might be excused for mistaking for inspiration those superstitious impulses which led her on to victory. But such feelings have not always been employed for noble ends. On the contrary, generally speaking, they have been scourges for mankind. Every kind of cruelty and torment; every species of injustice, rapine, and violence; wars, persecutions, and bloody deaths, have resulted from superstition. Man had scarcely begun to possess the earth, when it took hold of his nature, and since Eve believed the serpent, it has never ceased to prevail. Christ appeared to found a religion which affords no kindred soil for it; yet, nowhere has it flourished in more formidable proportions than among his professed followers and around altars dedicated to his name. We have witnessed a revival of letters and a reformation in the Church, a diffusion of science and education amongst the masses, — knowledge of all kinds, in fact, making the most gigantic strides,—and yet ever and anon, both in Europe and America, we are startled by coruscations in some unexpected quarter, reminding us of the flashes which emanated in former ages from Italy and Arabia, and proving how powerful is the hold which superstition has on the human mind.

Nor is its influence by any means confined to the ignorant and vulgar. Men of commanding intellect, well educated and well read, have in every age yielded to its sway. Napoleon thought he had a star; his nephew labours under some similar delusion; Wallenstein was an ardent believer in astrology; Lord Castlereagh relates that a Fire Spirit once appeared to him in a bedroom of a noble mansion; Thomson the poet was so fearful of supernatural agency, that he trembled to sleep alone, his dread being caused by the alleged circumstances of his father's death, who was minister of the parish of Ednam, in Roxburghshire, and it is said died from the effects of a ball of fire which struck him on the head as he was in the act of exorcising a ghost. Socrates had a demon as his adviser; Lord Bacon implicitly credited witchcraft; and Cardinal de Richelieu was in the habit of consulting an astrologer before setting out on his journeys. Among the greatest theologians and divines there are no less remarkable instances of the same weakness. Laud tells us in his Diary how alarmed he was when his picture fell down lest it should be ominous of ill, and how troubled he was on many occasions with apparitions of bishops in white and green, and wrinkled old men lying on the ground. Ignatius Loyola, whom the sternest Protestant would not call a weak man, saw the Trinity in Unity on the steps of the church of St. Dominic, communed with the Virgin Mary, and beheld the Saviour with mortal eyes. Luther attributed meteors to diabolical agency; Cudworth styled atheists all

who doubted the existence of witches; the life of Francis Xavier, the great apostle of the Indies, is a striking example of distinguished qualities both of mind and heart being combined with deplorable credulity. "An astrologer having assured Charles the Ninth of France that he would live as many days as he should turn about on his heels in an hour standing on one leg, his majesty every morning performed that solemn gyration; the principal officers of the court, the judges, the chancellors, and generals, likewise, in compliment, standing on one leg and turning round."* "From the rulers of mankind downwards," says Mr. J. A. St. John in his recent work on the "Education of the People," "we find beliefs, not founded in reason and irreconcilable with religion, flourishing far and wide; faith in prodigies, in destiny, in astrological fictions, in witchcraft, soothsaying, necromancy, chiromancy, and all the ridiculous paraphernalia of barbarism." Adam Smith never could be persuaded to walk in the Edinburgh meadows after sunset, because Hume had said he would if possible meet him there, and tell him the secrets of the unknown world.

It is curious, also, that men naturally incredulous have, in some instances, been strongly tainted with superstition. Dr. Johnson, for example, gloried in being sceptical in regard to wonders or even remarkable events taking place in the world around him; but he delighted in a miracle,—he saw apparitions,—he believed in second sight; he is even reported

* Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," vol. i. p. 279.

to have been one of the deceived by the Cock Lane ghost story. This remark is more especially true of those who are freethinkers in religious matters. There is a very singular connection between superstition and infidelity; many avowed unbelievers in revelation have been the victims of the most abject fears. Lord Herbert rejected the Bible, but he asked a sign from Heaven whether or not he should publish his book; and when he heard "a sound as of thunder," on a serene day, he set it down as expressive of the favourable opinion entertained of his performance by the invisible powers.

The superstitions prevalent among savage or semi-civilized nations are of two kinds; some of them cruel and horrible, others harmless and pleasing. Missionary chronicles are full of the former. Every one nowadays knows the dreadful rites practised in India and the islands of the Pacific; our own countrymen have witnessed mothers offering the bleeding bodies of their children on the altars of idols, men inflicting on themselves the most excruciating tortures, leaping over precipices and plunging into sacred rivers; women voluntarily being burnt alive on the funereal piles of their husbands; orgies, in fine, which pen cannot describe, carried on in the name of Deity. This picture of the heathen, however, has a more pleasing side,—"*J'ai passé moi-même,*" says Chateaubriand in his "*Souvenirs d'Amérique,*" "*chez une peuplade Indienne qui se prenait à pleurer à la vue d'un voyageur, parcequ'il lui rappelait des amis partis pour la contrée des Ames, et depuis long-tems*

en voyage." Mrs. Hemans paraphrases this beautiful legend in her lay entitled "The Stranger in Louisiana," beginning

"We saw thee, O stranger ! and wept."

Her exquisite poem "The Messenger-Bird," was written on reading what Picart relates of some tribes in Brazil. They pay great respect to a bird that sings mournfully in the night-time, imagining it to be a messenger sent by their deceased relatives with news from the other world.

Another of her pieces is "The Isle of Founts,"—

"Son of the stranger ; wouldst thou take
O'er yon blue hills thy lonely way,
To reach the still and shining lake,
Along whose banks the west winds play ?
Let no vain dreams thy heart beguile—
Oh ! seek thou not the Fountain Isle," &c.

The foundation of this is a narrative of Bertram in his "Travels through North and South Carolina,"—"The river St. Mary has its source from a vast lake or marsh, which lies between Flint and Oakmulge rivers, and occupies a space of nearly three hundred miles in circuit. This vast accumulation of waters in the wet season appears as a lake, and contains some large islands or knolls of rich high land, one of which the present generation of the Creek Indians represent to be a most blissful spot of earth. They say it is inhabited by a peculiar race of Indians, whose women are incomparably beautiful. They also

tell you that this terrestrial paradise has been seen by some of their enterprising hunters when in pursuit of game, but that in their endeavours to approach it, they were involved in perpetual labyrinths, and, like enchanted land, still as they imagined they had just gained it, it seemed to fly before them, alternately appearing and disappearing. They resolved at length to leave the delusive pursuit, and to return, which, after a number of difficulties, they effected. When they reported their adventures to their countrymen, the young warriors were inflamed with an irresistible desire to invade and make a conquest of so charming a country; but all their attempts have hitherto proved abortive, never having been able again to find that enchanting spot."

There is no class of men more courageous or indifferent of life than our sailors; nor does religion generally occupy much of their thoughts; yet they are proverbially superstitious. Often have they seen the horns of the huge Kraken in the Northern Seas, and made off under press of sail, lest their craft should be engulfed in the whirlpool caused by the sinking of that monster of the deep. When signs of an approaching hurricane appear, they see also Davy Jones perched among the ropes, calling the evil spirits to the scene of impending disaster; they tell you that a sinking ship has her dying lamentation as well as a swan; they will not drown a cat, in case a storm follows; and in moonlight nights with a cloudy sky, they witness apparitions without end. Indeed, their sea songs abound with stories of ghosts, omens, and

prodigies. Many a tedious hour has been enlivened by fore-castle recitals relating to the pranks played by spirits on Britain's hardy mariners.

It is scarcely possible to mix much with the peasantry of any country, or even to read a book of travels, without becoming acquainted with superstitious beliefs of which we had been previously ignorant. Both in the dark ages and in more enlightened times, ideas of this kind, some of them highly poetical, have prevailed more or less in every land.

Let us take another illustration from one of Mrs. Hemans's poems. "The Wood, Walk, and Hymn" opens thus :—

*" Child.—*There are the aspens, with their silvery leaves
Trembling, for ever trembling ; though the lime
And chestnut boughs, and those long arching sprays
Of eglantine hang still, as if the wood
Were all one picture !

*" Father.—*Hast thou heard, my boy,
The peasant's legend of that quivering tree ?

*" Child.—*No, father : doth he say the fairies dance
Amidst the branches ?

*" Father.—*Oh ! a cause more deep,
More solemn far, the rustic doth assign
To the strange restlessness of those wan leaves !
The cross, he deems, the blessed cross, whereon
The meek Redeemer bow'd his head to death,
Was framed of aspen wood ; and since that hour,
Through all its race the pale tree hath sent down
A thrilling consciousness, a secret awe,
Making them tremulous when not a breeze
Disturbs the airy thistle-down, or shakes
The light lines of the shining gossamer.

"Child (after a pause).—Dost thou believe it, father ?

"Father.—Nay, my child ;

*We walk by clearer light. But yet, even now,
With something of a lingering love, I read
The characters by that mysterious hour,
Stamp'd on the reverential soul of man
In visionary days, and thence thrown back
On the fair forms of nature. Many a sign
Of the great sacrifice which won us heaven,
The woodman and the mountaineer can trace
On rock, on herb, and flower."*

In Devonshire there lingers a notion that a sufferer cannot die as long as any lock or bolt in the dwelling remains closed, and that a beam over the deathbed prevents the departure of the spirit. Singularly enough, the same superstition prevails in Abyssinia. In Cheshire, before the heir of a family dies, trees are seen swimming for several days in the nearest lake. And by the dwellers on our eastern coast the black spots beyond the gills of a haddock are commonly supposed to be the marks left by the finger and thumb of St. Peter when he took the tribute money out of the mouth of a fish. Thackeray tells us in his "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century," that "among these many conjectures there are men of superstitious tempers who look upon the hoop-petticoat as a kind of prodigy. Some will have it that it portends the fall of the French king, and observe that the farthingale appeared in England a little before the ruin of the Spanish monarchy." If we pass over to Germany we find its forests and mountains full of strange beliefs. In the Odenwald the people main-

tain that the passing of the Wild Huntsman always precedes war. His phantom horses are heard to move through the air, and the voices of his attendants may be distinguished mixing with the breeze. On the approach of darkness the Servian thinks it necessary to terrify the demons which he imagines to be in his path, and for that purpose he indulges in a series of groans, shrieks, and wailing sounds, enough to scare Pandemonium. The fanatical sect of Skoptzi, in Russia, hold that the Emperor Peter the Third, Catharine's husband, was not murdered, but shall return from a sojourn in the East when the great bell of Moscow Cathedral announces to all true disciples the commencement of his second reign. In many parts of Portugal the people believe that in every tower formerly held by the Saracens there dwells an enchanted Moorish, who may be seen at sunrise and sunset leaning on some archway, the Niobe of her race.

In Scotland there are people, not only among the poorer classes, but among the gentry, who still cling to their faith in second sight. I have known well-educated persons, moving in the best society, frown upon those who spoke of it as a superstition gradually disappearing before the advance of intelligence, and seize with avidity every instance of it, however vaguely reported and ill-sustained by trustworthy evidence. Macculloch says that "it has undergone the fate of witchcraft: ceasing to be believed, it has ceased to exist." There are gentlemen and ladies, clergymen and landed proprietors, north of the Gram-

pians now, who would repudiate the statement with astonishment approaching to indignation. Those curious on this subject should read Collins's "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Scotch Highlands."

But are there none who smile at the idea of crediting second sight, and yet, not long ago, went out of their own sober senses about spirit-rapping and table-turning? One scarcely knows whether to laugh or mourn at seeing a company of well-informed, enlightened men and women attending the lecture of a professional mountebank, or skipping round a piece of furniture like the witches in *Tam o' Shanter*. The mistress scolds her servant-girl for giving her clothes to a fortune-teller, while she herself pays her half-crown to some charlatan who professes to hold communication with invisible beings; the father in one breath assures his children that there are neither ghosts nor fairies, and in the next proposes to go and hear the spirits rapping; the grave citizen who holds magic to be an abominable thing, seriously maintains that his old-fashioned round table, made of such ponderous materials that the housemaid used to require the footman to help her to move it, can now move of itself. Of how many childish follies like this have the British and American public been guilty within a very few years? How many impostors have had their evening's laugh at the expense of legislators, magistrates, and office-bearers of churches? It seems as if the scientific wonders of the age were not sufficient to supply excitement to some minds: they require supernatural assistance, and as they can no

longer believe in hobgoblins, they run after professors of clairvoyance.

But the modern superstitions are neither so poetical nor so grand as those of our forefathers: they are mere "earth bubbles," which yield no pleasure, and cannot long endure. The crowds who follow after them may well ask with Banquo—

"Have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"

All superstitions have more or less reference to religion and the concerns of another world; but some of them are common to nations professing very different faiths, and are not necessarily connected with any particular creed, prevailing among Christians, Mahomedans, and idolaters as well. Let me briefly notice these.

How wide-spread, for example, is the belief in witchcraft. It exists in all parts of the world, among men of the most various manners and customs and degrees of civilization. Shakspeare expresses several of the popular ideas respecting it in his famous scene in *Macbeth*. Bishop Jewel, preaching before the queen in 1558, thus gives utterance to his fears:—"It may please your grace to understand that witches and sorcerers, within these last years, are marvellously increased within your grace's realm. Your grace's subjects pine away, even unto the death: their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft. I pray God they never

practice further than upon the subject." If a reverend prelate could confess himself so childishly credulous, can we reasonably find fault with peasants weighing suspected persons against the church bible, or throwing them into horseponds? We are told that the magistrates of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, two hundred years ago, sent for a Scotchman who pretended to test witchcraft in a different manner. His plan was to prick the victims with pins, and several of them suffered death after the trial.

In these times it was not uncommon to proclaim fasts on account of the prevalence of this kind of supernatural agency. Witches were supposed to ride on broomsticks through the air, to smite districts with disease, to control the elements, to cause domestic dissensions, to render the land barren, and to drive away the milk from the cows. They could be heard laughing in dark nights as they passed over homesteads, and at the break of day might be seen skipping across the fields. The author of the "Gentle Shepherd" thus celebrates their misdeeds:—

" When last the wind made glaud a roofless barn ;
 When last the burn bare down my mither's yarn ;
 When brawny elfshot never mair came hame ;
 When Tibby kirk'd and there nae butter came ;
 When Bessy Freetock's chuffy-cheeked wean
 To a fairy turn'd, and could nae stand its lane ;
 When Wattie wandered ae night thro' the shaw,
 And tint himsel amaist amang the snaw ;
 When Mungo's mare stood still and swat with fright ;
 When he brought east the howdy under night ;

When Bawsy shot to dead upon the green,
And Sarah tint a snood was nae mair seen ;
You, Lucky, gat the wyte of aw fell oot,
And ilka ane here dreads you round about."

Nor has the belief in witchcraft by any means died out in this nineteenth century, in this enlightened Christian land. Horseshoes may still be found nailed on the thresholds of doors, as a protection against it: in the year 1841 several instances were reported in the metropolis; every now and then we read bewitching cases brought before the London police courts; and in all parts of England there are wise men, who the people imagine have power to counteract the evil influence. In the autumn of 1858, there occurred in Essex an instance of the most deplorable credulity. A labourer's daughter accused an old woman living near her of having brought her under spells. First one witch-doctor, and then another, appeared, to cure her; and the overseers of the union refused to allow her being put in an asylum, as they had faith in the ability of these practitioners to do what they professed. Wizards never seem to have been so plentiful as witches. King James, in his work on "Demonology," gives us the reason of this:—"The female sex," remarks the royal sage, "is frailer than man is; so is it easier to be entrapped in these grosse snares of the Divell, as was ever well proved to be true by the serpent's deceiving of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homlier with that sex sensine."

Then there are the brownies, who, unlike warlocks,

are kind and considerate spirits, assisting housewives, and doing all sorts of work when the family is buried in slumber. In the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland, the belief in these supernatural assistants still lingers. They are heard singing in the darkness, on their way to their duties.

The Scotch people also have an idea that fords and ferries, especially in dark stormy nights, are haunted by ill-conditioned beings denominated kelpies, who, like alligators, lie in wait to devour hapless travellers. The Irish hear the banshee mourning over the death of their relatives. Our English poets make frequent reference to the exploits of Robin Goodfellow ; and Drayton, in the following lines, describes another mischievous sprite :—

“This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking, like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,
Of purpose to deceive us ;
And leading us, makes us to stray,
Long winter nights out of the way ;
And when we stick in mire and clay,
He doth with laughter leave us.”

This verse reminds me of superstitions connected with the natural phenomenon known as the *ignis fatuus*, or will-o'-the-wisp, which, in many parts of Europe, is yet supposed to be souls escaped from purgatory. Some regard the appearance of these elf-fires as the certain prelude of death, and sailors look upon them as ominous of shipwreck.

Milton alludes to it in the ninth book of "Paradise Lost":—

"A wandering fire,
Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night
Condenses, and the cold environs round,
Kindled through agitation to a flame
Which oft, they said, some evil spirit attends,
Hovering and blazing with delusive light,
Misleads th' amazed night wand'rer from his way,
To bog and mires, and oft through pond or pool,
There swallowed up and lost, from succour far."

But the fairies were the most pleasing creations of a credulous age. Some think that the crusaders brought them from the east; but their pranks were celebrated by British bards long anterior to the days of Peter the Hermit; and they danced in the forests of Germany before Jerusalem was possessed by the Saracens. We have all seen their circles on the dewy grass, and the mounds on the meadow where sat their queen. In some countries they are called *good people*, who patronize virtue and avoid the abodes of vice; traces of their handiwork may be distinguished in the rocks, and among the pebbles of the brook, and often in still autumn nights their music may be heard on the distant hills; they have been seen, too, rushing past in their midnight chases after game, cheering as they go, and making the rocks re-echo their "Tally-ho!"

And if thousands of our fellow-countrymen still cling to a belief in the existence of fairies, how many more believe in ghosts? It is not yet one hundred years since London was startled out of its propriety,

by the nocturnal visitant in Cock-lane; and men quite as wise as Dr. Johnson have, in numberless instances, since felt a kind of awe creeping over them, at the relation of similar stories. They are told to us by our nurses: we hear in our early years marvellous narratives of adventures with spirits; and as we grow up, despite our better judgment, we cannot well divest ourselves of the idea that the spectres of departed ones do occasionally return to earth. To dress oneself in a white sheet and walk in the churchyard, is, even now, a sure method of scaring half the inhabitants of the parish. Most old castles have their resident phantoms: how few amongst us have not been warned against a haunted room? It is a common idea that ghosts are sentenced to perpetual locomotion, as a penalty for sins committed in the flesh. Shakspeare alludes to this in Hamlet—

“I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night.”

To prevent their disturbing households, it was formerly customary to exorcise them, the clergyman officiating, and the Latin language being used.

Nor are there wanting people who maintain that the arch-enemy of mankind himself now and then appears, with his hoofs and tail, to accomplish some fiendish end. Mr. Bradwardine, in Waverley, tells a story of one Janet Gellatley, who was suspected to be a witch, because she had one son a poet and another a fool, and who, when brought before the Whig gentry and ministers of the neighbourhood,

suddenly exclaimed, "Look to yourselves! look to yourselves! I see the evil one sitting in the midst of ye." "The surprise was general, and terror and flight its immediate consequences." We all know, too, how wide-spread is the belief in sorcery. Othello was accused of winning Desdemona by "conjunction and mighty magic." Not only Shakspeare, but most of our English poets frequently refer to spells of this kind; and an historian, writing of the state of this country four hundred years ago says, "There was not a man then in England who entertained the least doubt of the reality of sorcery, necromancy, and other diabolical arts." Our newspapers from time to time inform us of cases proving that such arts are practised extensively and successfully still.

One of the most ancient and wide-spread superstitions is that of the evil eye. Virgil, in one of his Eclogues, writes, "*Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos*," and various other Roman authors make like references. In the East, among the Egyptians and Turks, the faith in this influence is almost universal; while in Scotland, notwithstanding its educational advantages, methods are pursued to prevent the consequences of "an ill ee."

The wearing of amulets is another custom founded on religious credulity, which prevails more or less throughout the world. In Christendom, as well as heathendom, we see them round the necks of an ignorant peasantry. "The Mullahs among the Kirghis," we are informed by a recent traveller, "sell amulets in the shape of pieces of paper, with a few cha-

racters traced upon them, and get a sheep for each scrap."

In general society, it is reckoned unlucky to spill salt on the table, to sit down with a party of thirteen, or to pass under a ladder in the street, to set out on a voyage on a Friday, or to be married in the month of May; while it is thought lucky to break a wine-glass, to sail on a Sunday, to possess a crooked sixpence, and find a horseshoe. The superstitions respecting particular days, such as Valentine's Day and Hallowe'en, are curious; so are those attaching to the moon. Many a child has been afraid to lift a stick on Sunday, lest he should be carried off by the man in the moon; Shakspeare calls her the "sovereign mistress of true melancholy;" some farmers will not sow when she is waning; in *Hudibras* we find allusions to her moods as being favourable or unfavourable to medical operations; and the ballad of Sir Patrick Spence contains the following affecting lines:—

"Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone
Wi' the auld moone in her arme;
And I feir, I feir, by deir master,
That we will come to harme."

From the earliest times philosophers have speculated on the true theory of dreams, and handbooks and dictionaries have actually been published as keys to them. Some of the explanations in these works are farfetched, and simply ridiculous; others are highly poetical, if not true,—such as, "To dream of gathering or making nosegays is unlucky, showing

our best hopes shall wither as flowers do in nose-gays." After all—

" Dreams are but the raised
Impressions of premeditated things ; "

and in nine cases out of ten can easily be traced to causes of a physical and mental nature, with which supernatural agency has nothing whatever to do. We read in Dryden's " Tales from Chaucer,"—

" All dreams, as in old Galen I have read,
Are from repletion and complexion bred
From rising fumes of undigested food,
And noxious humours that infect the blood."

On the subject of *omens* many volumes might be written. History is full of instances where much importance was attached to them. When one of Themistocles' assistants sneezed previous to an engagement with the Persians, a soothsayer instantly presaged a Grecian victory; when the gilded ball fell from the top of the flagstaff at Braemar, in 1715, the Highland clans hesitated to unfurl the standard of the Pretender; when James the Second was crowned, he confessed to a superstitious terror on the flag upon the White Tower being rent by the wind.

Some children are born with cauls—a sort of membrane covering their heads. This is supposed to augur good fortune to the child itself, and such articles are actually bought in the market as preservatives of the health and wealth of their possessors.

Meteors are believed to be heralds of wars, calamities, and convulsions :

“ These signs forerun the death or fall of kings.”

When the cat washes her face, the housewife looks for rain. Much information, according to some, is to be derived from the appearance of spiders' webs. Every one has heard what is denoted by the sight of one, two, or three magpies. Old women see all sorts of things, good, bad, and indifferent, in the glowing coals of a fire. We derive from our Pagan ancestors the idea that it is unlucky to kill a swallow. The Scottish peasantry constantly see the wraiths of persons about to die. The glance of the cockatrice is instant death. The forefinger of the right hand is supposed to contain venom, and thousands would not touch with it any kind of wound. How many of us have lain in bed at night in a state of almost speechless terror, because a little insect in the woodwork endeavouring to eat its way out made a noise like the ticking of a watch !

Closely allied to these superstitions is the belief in charms. Only a few years ago, when a man was executed at Warwick, no sooner had the spirit departed than women crowded on the scaffold to pass the murderer's hand over wens, swellings, and other physical excrescences ; about the same time a poor person in a neighbouring county was discovered endeavouring to cure her child of hooping-cough by tying round its neck its godmother's staylace ; all over England the girls seek for the even-ash and the

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four-leaved clover ; housebreakers in Ireland use a dead man's hand to render them invisible ; and in the western provinces of France infants have been murdered in order to obtain their skulls for a similar purpose.

But there are superstitions more directly connected with religion which call for some notice here. We use the word as descriptive of the idolatry of heathen nations, and we know to what cruelties and abominable rites it has given rise in the dark places of the earth,—how it has superseded natural affection, and converted men into very demons. We should at first sight suppose it to be incompatible with Christianity ; but the experience of more than eighteen hundred years has proved that not even the Gospel has been powerful enough to eradicate it. Under the shadow, and with the sanction of the Roman Catholic Church, we find persons believing that the Almighty works miracles for the most paltry ends ; that the laws of nature are suspended in order to further the designs of crafty priests, and that God's favour may be obtained through the propitiation of tutelary saints. What Paul said on Mars Hill might with propriety be said in every country acknowledging the authority of the Pope. “ Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” Can anything, for example, be more melancholy, than for intelligent people to believe that the consecrated bread and wine, which, to quote from a missal prepared by the Council of Trent, and concurred in by Pius the Fifth, might “ disappear by any accident, or be taken away

by the wind, or a mouse, or any other animal," are the body and blood of the Saviour? Then there is the worship of images and relics, which the early followers of Jesus abhorred, but which, about three hundred years after his crucifixion, crept into the church, and for twelve centuries maintained its ground almost unchallenged, although many of its accessories, such as the use of incense and lighted candles, were borrowed from the ceremonies of Paganism. In the year 754, there assembled a council of 338 bishops to consider the question of images. They expressed their opinion as follows: "Christ hath delivered us from idolatry, and hath taught us to adore Him in spirit and in truth. But the devil not being able to endure the beauty of the church, hath insensibly brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity, persuading men to worship the creature, and to take for God a work, to which they give the name of Jesus Christ." But common sense in such matters often makes its voice heard in vain. Men cling as if spell-bound to the unearthly and incredible; they like the excitement of supernatural fear and hope, and seem to reason themselves easily into a belief in absurdities. Before images you still see rational beings prostrate, and representations of saints on canvas are invested with all kinds of miraculous powers. "The picture of the Virgin at Astrakhan," says the author of a *Tarantasse Journey through Eastern Russia*, "attributed to the Evangelist Luke, is believed by the people to have returned to its own proper abode in that city, of its own power and

accord, four different times after having been carried off by the wild inhabitants of the steppes." The Neapolitans have a saying: "Il prodigio o è grosso o è niente." In other words, that if a miracle is not almost incredible, it is not worthy of the name. Mariolatry, or the devotion paid to the Virgin, is another curious form of superstition. It was utterly unknown in the earlier and purer ages of the church. Not a vestige of it appears in the catacombs. When the image of the mother of God was shown to the Indian disciples of St. Thomas on the coast of Malabar, they refused with indignation to worship it, saying "We are Christians, not idolaters." Yet in many countries, especially on the shores of the Mediterranean, she is a much more prominent object of adoration than her son. "Jesus seems dethroned from his peculiar office as Mediator between God and man," writes Mr. Bartlett, in his "Pictures from Sicily," "and Mary everywhere substituted in his room." Mr. Hallam quotes the following from Le Grand d'Aussy, as illustrative of what he calls the stupid absurdities of Mariolatry. "There was a man whose occupation was highway robbery; but whenever he set out on any such expedition, he was careful to address a prayer to the Virgin. Taken at last, he was sentenced to be hanged. While the cord was round his neck, he made his usual prayer, nor was it ineffectual. The Virgin supported his feet with her white hands, and thus kept him alive two days, to the no small surprise of the executioner, who attempted to complete his work with strokes of a

sword. But the same invisible hand turned aside the weapon, and the executioner was compelled to release his victim, acknowledging the miracle."

The history and practices of the papacy supply endless examples of such like delusions. Salvatore is a favourite name in the south of Europe, "because," says an Italian divine, "God has never permitted the devil to torture in hell a man who bore that name." In the year 1560, the youth in the Jesuit school at Ingoldstadt, walked two and two on a pilgrimage to Eichstadt, in order to be strengthened for their confirmation "by the dew that dropped from the tomb of St. Walpurgis." The Duke of Alva, one of the boldest and most unscrupulous men of his time, who all his life had been on familiar terms with princes, was so overawed when he first saw the sovereign pontiff, that his voice failed, and his presence of mind forsook him. The visitor to Rome may any day see crowds of penitents, young and old, rich and poor, ascending on their knees the steps of Santa Scala. One can scarcely turn over a page of ecclesiastical narrative connected with mediæval days, or visit a Roman Catholic country now, without being painfully impressed with the prevalence of superstition. The Crusades and the Saracenic conquests both had their origin in this potential motive. The Christian knight believed he could work out his own salvation by aiding in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the infidel; the Moslem warrior burned to earn for himself eternal beatitude, by carrying the religion of Mahomet into foreign lands, and both succeeded,

not in advancing the cause of truth and righteousness, but in strewing their path with the corpses of God's creatures, in destroying the industrial monuments of centuries, in ruining agriculture, and in rendering fertile, thriving, provinces, howling deserts or fields of blood.

The superstitious custom of making pilgrimages is no more reasonable, and nearly as injurious to all parties concerned. The Turks have a maxim, "If your friend has made the pilgrimage once, distrust him—if he has made it twice, cut him dead;" and what is true of those who wander to Mecca is also to some extent true of those who visit the holy places of Christendom. "Among the many routes beaten by the foot of man," says Isaac Taylor, "which catch the eye as we look abroad over the earth's surface, if there be one that stares out from the landscape, whitened with bones, we shall always find it terminate at some holy shrine." Nor is Protestantism guiltless of the charge. Men who profess the principles of the Reformation, believe in baptismal regeneration, in the gift of tongues, and in voices from the invisible world addressing camp meetings in the forest. Mormonism is one of the most recent as it is one of the most amazing and pitiful instances of religious credulity.

It is almost unnecessary to state that ignorance is the mother of superstition. It invariably prevails most extensively among people who are comparatively in a rude and uncultivated state, where knowledge has not been able to restrain the flights of imagina-

tion, and science has not appeared to destroy the singular creations of an ancient creed. The deaths in mines, now known to be caused by the escape of unwholesome gases, were formerly supposed to be the work of demons; the peasant, unlearned in meteorology, naturally preserves his faith in the moon. But the aspect of civilized countries in this respect is changing fast. Commerce, manufactures, books, newspapers, lectures, and magazines, are making sad inroads into the realms of fancy; charms, omens, and incantations begin to lose their power; the old woman is allowed to go down to her grave in peace; the ploughshare invades the fold where the Druid sacrificed to his god; haunted houses and churchyards become fewer and farther between; education is even expelling the ghosts from their lurking-places in ancient towers. Tabby, the old servant of the Brontë family, said of the fairies, "It wur the factories as had driven 'em away."

Let it be the endeavour of all who know the tendency in the mind of man to run into extremes, and pass from superstition to scepticism, to hold up nobler objects for the contemplation of the people, to direct into higher channels their passions of hope and fear, to open wide to them the gates of the temple of knowledge, that they may there worthily exercise both reason and imagination, and worship the one living and true God.

THE PLEASURES OF LITERATURE.

THE ancient Egyptians had a proverb that quiet study is the medicine of the mind. One does not require to ransack history or even to search long among his own acquaintances for men ready to bear evidence to the truth of this saying. Many a friendless boy who has found his way into a great city from a secluded country home; many a hard-working artisan who feels himself fit for something better than manual labour; many a clerk and shopman for whom trade has no charms; many of the grand old masters whose footsteps are perpetually heard in Time's corridors; many of the profoundest thinkers of every age, have found their elysium among their books. In a multitude of small ill-furnished rooms scattered throughout all our large towns, there burn every evening lamps of humble students, imperfectly educated, having no access to valuable libraries, finding the battle of life not a little arduous and disheartening; but still nobly bent on self-improvement and looking forward with pleasure after the

toils of the day to an hour or two of uninterrupted converse with the mighty dead. The poor apprentice thus bent on the acquisition of knowledge, is more likely to read to a good purpose, and to attain to a high standard of intellectual culture, than the young nobleman whose studies are all carefully directed and superintended, but who has no difficulties with which to contend, and no ardent ambition to excel in the walks of literature. Most of our great writers have thus had to fight their way on and upward: for long years have had but a single chamber and a single shelf, and have gratified their first longings after intellectual enjoyment with stray copies of magazines or of volumes by authors altogether forgotten. Nor are there wanting men born to greater opulence who prefer the seclusion of their own libraries to the excitement of politics, the whirl of fashionable society, or the delights of the chase, who would rather pore over the works of our leading historians and poets, or collect materials for literary efforts of their own, than stand amid the ruins of Thebes, or listen to the "Gloria in Excelsis" in the Cathedral of Seville, or hunt the buffalo on the prairies beyond the Missouri, or gaze upon the most brilliant military spectacle, or hear a debate in the British senate, shared in by the foremost orators of the age. Not a few who have had all these advantages, who have moreover a keen relish for a life of activity and find real enjoyment in the sublime and beautiful, have felt study to be more delightful still, and among their books and papers have been quite able to enter into the spirit

of the poet's remark about forgetting "to trace the feathered feet of time." That poet was Samuel Rogers, and he in his "Table Talk" has the following passage :—

"When literature is the sole business of life, it becomes a drudgery; when we are able to resort to it only at certain hours, it is a charming relaxation. In my earlier years I was a banker's clerk, obliged to be at the desk every day from ten till five o'clock; and I shall never forget the delight with which on returning home I used to read and write during the evening."

The pleasures of composition are thus enthusiastically celebrated by Buffon :—"These are the most luxurious and delightful moments of life; moments which have often enticed me to pass fourteen hours at my desk in a state of transport; this gratification, more than glory, is my reward."

"Literature, like virtue," writes the elder Disraeli, "is often its own reward, and the enthusiasm some experience in the permanent enjoyments of a vast library, has far outweighed the neglect or the calumny of the world, which some of its votaries have received. From the time that Cicero poured forth his feelings, in his oration for the poet Archias, innumerable are the testimonies of men of letters of the pleasurable delirium of their researches."

Thoroughly to appreciate, however, the pleasures of study, a man must be in earnest, must pursue it with ardour, must give up his whole mind to it for the time being. "There is nothing," says Sydney

Smith, "so horrible as languid study." It is extremely amusing to hear some people talking of the happiness to be derived from reading, who cannot take up a book without falling asleep, or looking at their watches, or getting up to walk about the room, or indulging in frivolous conversation at the close of every chapter. It was said of Johnson, "look at him tearing out the bowels of a book." He was like a hungry lion entirely engaged with his prey, having neither eyes nor ears for aught going on around. The man who wishes to become a true student, must throw his whole soul into the work and suffer his favourite authors to carry him off to the battle-field, the senate-chamber, and the temple of fame.

In order thoroughly to enjoy a course of reading, especially during the long evenings of winter, one must guard himself against those petty interruptions of which Sir Walter Scott complained so much, as breaking in upon the current of thought and diverting the mind from its purpose. It is not only much more profitable but much pleasanter to take alopatic rather than homœopathic doses of study; to read and write alternately for several hours at a time, and then to indulge in an entire holiday; for when one sits down for an hour or two to a book or a theme liable to successive calls to other occupations, his mental faculties never get fairly absorbed in his work; no sooner do his thoughts begin freely to flow than their stream is suddenly broken, and often when his subject is just about to open up to his intellectual vision, the entrance of a friend, or some such trifling accident,

causes the curtain to drop, and renders necessary a second and equally laborious introductory process. Besides occasional idleness, complete relaxation is a bodily necessity. Many students have killed themselves at an early age by neglecting the physical for the mental, and keeping their intellects constantly on the stretch.

It will also be found beneficial in the case of persons having much leisure time for literary pursuits, to have two strings to their bow, to intersperse reading with composition, and to carry on simultaneously the study of authors grave and gay. Philosophy and poetry may go hand and hand; it is a relief to lay down Locke and take up Byron, to let a volume of Hallam's be followed by a standard novel or a book of travels. "Le changement de l'étude," said d'Aguesseau, chancellor of France, "est mon seul délassement."

It is desirable, moreover, to spend an hour or two occasionally in thinking, to accustom oneself to severe thought, to get into the habit of concentrating the attention on a subject, without either a volume or a pen in your hand, or even to

"Sit in reverie, and watch
The changing colour of the waves that break
Upon the idle seashore of the mind."

The true scholar will never yield to the temptation of skipping or mere extract reading. We have all met very ignorant and shallow men who, by perusing reviews and magazines, and LOOKING INTO less

ephemeral productions, have acquired a certain facility in conversation and a smattering of knowledge which render them agreeable companions at a dinner-table. Some of these folk actually lay themselves out to obtain that superficial acquaintance with books which is necessary for the purposes of small talk. Even in the pages of Don Juan such persons may learn wisdom:---

“O reader! if that thou canst read,—and know,
’Tis not enough to spell, or even to read,
To constitute a reader, there must go
Virtues of which both you and I have need:
Firstly, begin with the beginning (though
That clause is hard), and secondly—proceed.”

There can surely be little need to inculcate diligence and a determination to allow nothing to stand in the way of devoting to study a reasonable proportion of one’s time. We are told that those Romans who were fond of mimicking everything Athenian, made their slaves carry Plato with them to the chase, so that should the boar be temporarily lost, they might improve their time. This of course was turning the pursuit of literature into ridicule, besides being opposed to the maxim of the wise man; but instruction may often be derived from prevalent follies, and men may be industrious, persevering, and determined in their efforts to improve their minds without going to extremes like the knight of whom we read in Don Quixote, who “through little sleep and much reading had his brain dried up, and came

at last to lose his wits." Every schoolboy knows that Titus, if twenty-four hours passed without his performing some good action, was wont to exclaim "I have lost a day." An Italian author tells us that "Midas was not more sparing of his money than Cosmo de Medici was of his time." Pascal killed himself by the severity of his intellectual labours; Milton, in early youth, by the most rigid economy of his leisure hours, mastered Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish, besides becoming in *his* generation what Lord Brougham has been called in *ours*, a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. Gibbon began his work every morning at six o'clock; it has been said of Burke, "he had an application that knew no intermission, and a zeal that no obstacle could subdue." Not only is it a great mistake to suppose that most men of literary eminence have been idle; they owe not a little of that very eminence to the mental toil undergone in striving after excellence. Unwearied labour and painful effort have sometimes accomplished a task in which genius failed. Greatness has as often been the reward of painstaking, industrious, resolute men, as of men endowed with conspicuous talents, and capable of herculean exertion for the moment, but deficient in steadfastness and ability to apply. Longfellow writes of a certain baron of Hohenfels who was "rather a miscellaneous youth, a universal genius, who pursued all things with eagerness, but for a short time only; music, poetry, painting, pleasure, even the study of the Pandects;" such a person could never properly

appreciate the pleasures of literature. They increase just in proportion as the drudgery is got over; they are the reward of diligence and perseverance, and cannot be experienced by the idle, the inconstant, or the irresolute man.

So manifold indeed are the advantages of steadiness of purpose when applied to the cultivation of the mind, that some of the best judges have been led to deprecate varied and discursive reading. Sir Walter Scott, in the third chapter of *Waverley*, moralizes with reference to his hero, "Alas! while he was thus permitted to read only for the gratification of his amusement, he foresaw not that he was losing for ever the opportunity of acquiring habits of firm and assiduous application, of gaining the art of controlling, directing, and concentrating the powers of his mind for earnest investigation,—an art far more essential than even that intimate acquaintance with classical learning, which is the primary object of study." There is, no doubt, much truth in this reasoning, and it cannot be denied that many persons have wasted precious years in accumulating a "moles indigesta" of learning, or as Lord Cockburn calls it, a "respectable chaos of accidental knowledge," who, had their studies been more systematic and better directed, might have exercised a mighty influence on their fellows; still, at the same time, to read as a task is seldom beneficial, and in numerous instances it will be found desirable in this respect to be guided very much by the inclination and the taste. Mr. Hallam reasons with much force and justice when he says,

"We cannot too much remember, that all objects of intellectual pursuit are as bodies acting with reciprocal forces in one system, being all in relation to the faculties of the mind, which is itself but one; and that the most extensive acquaintance with the various provinces of literature, will not fail to strengthen our dominion over those we more peculiarly deem our own." Besides, if you prescribe to a young man a course of study out of which it is unlawful to pass, you are apt to render study itself distasteful to him; whereas if allowed to roam at large over the wide fields of literature, he may be expected at the termination of his survey, to settle down in some favoured spot, and making use of his varied stores for its decoration, convert it into a very Sharon, attractive to all passers by.

Every young man should recollect, that the highest honours which the world can bestow on learning are within his reach. The ascent to them is, no doubt, laborious, few may have the constancy to persevere in the struggle for them, and those few may have obstacles to surmount requiring a brave and an enduring spirit; but how many men have made knowledge the stepping-stone to fame and power who had not one tithe of the advantages possessed by the majority of British youth!

Felix Peretti, the gardener of Fermo's son, used to pass long evenings in conning his lessons without supper, and with no better light than that afforded by the lantern hung up at the crossings of the streets, and when this failed him, he went to the

lamp that burned before the Host in some church.—He died Sixtus the Fifth—one of the most powerful popes of Rome.

In 1499, a boy in poor circumstances at a Parisian school, thus wrote:—"I have given my whole soul to Greek learning, and as soon as I get any money I shall first buy Greek books and then clothes." That boy was Erasmus, the courted of kings—the first scholar of his age.

A young man was once found studying mathematics and navigation before the mast of a Newcastle collier. His name was Cook, and he opened up half the world to civilisation and commerce.

It is needless to multiply examples. Well-known instances occur to every mind—instances of men born to poverty, placed in the most disadvantageous circumstances, who, by their own ardent desire for knowledge and invincible will, have reached the very highest steps in the ladder of learning, and left behind them a reputation more enduring than that of statesmen and conquerors.

There is one mistake into which all students are apt to fall, which requires a word of notice, viz., the habit of sitting up at night. This may appear to the reader an unimportant matter; but it has deprived the world of some of its brightest ornaments at a very early age. Nocturnal study caused the premature death of Friedrich Schiller; it has shattered the nerves and impaired the understanding of not a few whom it has not hurried to the tomb. "There is," says Isaac Disraeli, "an intemperance in study, in-

compatible often with our social or more active duties. It was the boast of Cicero that his philosophical studies had never interfered with the services he owed the republic." The mornings and forenoons are the most favourable to vigorous thought and exertion of the mind not injurious to the body. Those who cannot devote them to literature, who during these hours have other and more pressing pursuits to follow, will find it advantageous so to arrange their households as to commence to their books as soon as possible in the evening. Men who value their own time will devote a very short portion of it to the newspapers. They can be taken up for a few minutes after meals or before going to bed. If a man once gets into the habit of making the *Times* a study, he may as well lock up his bookcases. Nothing is easier than to while away the precious hours between dinner and supper with the daily and weekly periodicals; nothing is more prejudicial to mental culture or more likely to make triflers of men, whom a course of judicious reading might enable to take a high place amongst their fellows.

Fewer people require to be warned against heavy literature; but there are parents who are perpetually forcing their children to pore over ponderous tomes of divinity and huge books on general subjects written in the driest and most uninteresting style. The inevitable consequence of this of course is to produce an aversion for reading altogether, and to drive the young to seek pleasures less elevating, noble, and pure. There are many heads of families in this

country who might profitably peruse the opening paragraphs of Macaulay's essay on "Burleigh and his Times." "We cannot sum up the merits of the stupendous mass of paper which lies before us ('Memoirs of Burleigh,' by Dr. Nares) better, than by saying that it consisted of about two thousand closely-printed quarto pages, that it occupies fifteen hundred inches cubic measure, and that it weighs sixty pounds avoirdupois. Such a book might, before the deluge, have been considered as light reading by Hilpa and Shalum. But, unhappily, the life of man is now threescore years and ten; and we cannot but think it somewhat unfair in Dr. Nares to demand from us so large a proportion of so short an existence. Compared with the labour of reading through these volumes, all other labour, the labour of thieves on the treadmill, of children in factories, of negroes on sugar plantations, is an agreeable recreation. There was, it is said, a criminal in Italy, who was suffered to make his choice between Guicciardini and the galleys. He chose the history. But the war of Pisa was too much for him. He changed his mind and went to the oar. Guicciardini, though certainly not the most amusing of writers, is a Herodotus or a Froissart, when compared with Dr. Nares. It is not merely in bulk, but in specific gravity also, that these memoirs exceed all other human compositions."

It is now time for us to enter the *library*. This term is used on account of a prejudice caused by a remark made somewhere or other, by Dickens, "that you

never knew a man who never read or wrote either who hadn't got some small back parlour which he would call a '*study*.' " Now a library, to be useful and well furnished, need contain no old folios, or splendidly-bound editions, or rare and costly copies of ancient authors, or illuminated missals, or shelves full of gilt, and calf-skin, and morocco ; in the words of an old satirist—

"Full goodly bound in pleasaunt coverture
Of damas satten, or else of velvet pure."

"As soon as I enter a house of such a collector," says La Bruyère, "I am ready to faint on the staircase, from a strong smell of leather. In vain the owner shows me fine editions, gold leaves, and Etruscan binding: I thank him for his politeness, and, as little as himself, care to visit the tanhouse, which he calls his library." There *are* men—literary empirics—who pride themselves in laying up what Isaac Taylor calls "curious lumber, of whatever kind most completely unites the qualities of rarity and worthlessness;" but books should be bought for the purpose of being perused, not looked at. Some folks fill their cases with the handsomest editions of the most noted authors, who never in their lives read a syllable of these authors' writings, and who have not the most remote intention of doing so. These apartments, which have been styled "the madhouses of the human mind," with their stately, glittering, but unopened *tomes*, remind one of the story which Gillies tells in his "Memoirs of a Literary Veteran," concerning a landed proprietor in the county of Forfar. "The laird o' Balnamoon," says he, "explained to a

friend the reason his books could not be taken down from the book-shelves. 'John, the wricht, and me commenced thegither, and I garred him tak the saw to the biggest volumes, and he sawed off an inch here and half an inch there, till we made snod wark. Then the books fitted, and John he packit them, and drove them in wi' his mell. Ye needna think to poke there, Sandie, it wad tak the deil's ain fingers to draw them oot again.' "

The man who has a library for ornament, not for use; who can sit among "the grand old masters" and read only the *Times*, may be less outspoken and honest, but not a whit more deserving of such literary property than the laird of Balmamoon.

Those who adopt the plan of pursuing two different kinds of study at the same time, who, having the whole day, or the greater part of it, at their own disposal, can afford to devote two or three hours to books requiring severer thought, and an equal number to lighter literature, will find philosophy and travels both pleasant and profitable companions. Every one ought to make himself more or less acquainted with the scenery and productions, the manners and customs, the arts and religious rites of foreign lands, whether in the venerable East or in the promising West. The man who is ignorant of the geography and actual condition of the world in which he dwells, can only be said to be half-educated. The inquiring mind will delight to accompany Humboldt over the wild sierras of the Andes, to compare the various accounts of men and things in the United States, to penetrate with

Barth and Livingstone into the interior of Africa, to visit with Williams the sunny islands of the Pacific, and to explore with Fortune the tea districts of China.

Many works of this class emanate from the press every year, from which much instruction and enjoyment may be received. They can be perused with advantage when the mental powers require refreshment, after having been kept in a state of tension by Locke and Paley, Reid and Stewart, Bacon and Brown. While no description of reading is better fitted to cultivate the understanding than the works of the principal authors in metaphysics and morals, profound thinkers as well as masters of language, it may be well to warn students of the present day against what may be called the German philosophy, or, as Thomas Carlyle has happily described it, "the dreadful array of first principles, the forest huge of terminology and definitions, where the panting intellect of weaker men wanders as in pathless thickets, and at length sinks powerless to the earth, oppressed with fatigue and suffocated with scholastic miasma." Bacon, in his "Novum Organum," says, that the philosophy of the ancients ended in nothing but disputation, that it was neither a vineyard nor an olive-ground, but an intricate wood of briars and thistles, from which those who lost themselves in it brought back many scratches and no food. If this be true of the writings of Aristotle and Plato, how much more true is it of those of Fichte and Kant? "Germany," remarks Mr. Hallam, "indeed, has been the native soil of mysticism in Europe." A living American author represents a giant

transcendentalist of that country as "an ill-proportioned figure, considerably more like a heap of fog and darkness;" and another of our United States cousins says, that the speculations of our continental neighbour in literature, philosophy, and religion, "though pleasant to walk in, and lying under the shadow of great names, yet lead to no important result. They resemble rather those roads in the western forests of my native land, which, though broad and pleasant at first, and lying beneath the shadow of great branches, finally dwindle to a squirrel track, and run up a tree." There is a provoking tendency, moreover, on the part of these German philosophers, by means of words as jaw-breaking as incomprehensible, to dress up old exploded notions in a new garb, to present to the public as creations of their own minds, ideas, which, when divested of their wordy coverings, are found to be fallacies as old as the days of Socrates or Solomon. What Carlyle said of Kant, viz., "the end and aim of his philosophy seem not to be to make abstruse things simple, but to make simple things abstruse," may also be said of a large proportion of recent German writers in metaphysics and theology. Their influence has been most pernicious, especially on the pulpit of this country. An appropriate motto to many of their volumes may be found in Shelley's "Peter Bell:"—

"The devil then sent to Leipsic fair,
For Born's translation of Kant's book;
A world of words, tail foremost, where
Right—wrong—false—true—and foul—and fair,
As in a lottery-wheel are shook."

There are some strait-laced people in this world; generally speaking by no means well read themselves, or capable of giving advice in the matter of books, who reprobate, under any circumstances, the perusal of novels. Dr. Johnson, in his Preface to Shakspeare, oracularly observed that "the mind which has feasted on the luxurious wonders of fiction has no taste for the insipidity of truth;" and there have never been wanting persons ready to pin their faith to this far too sweeping observation, and to take it as a guide to their practice. The wise doctor, however, sometimes wrote as well as spoke hastily. In all his references to the subject, he points out the dangers to which both writers and readers of works of fancy are exposed; but in the following sentence we recognize the more matured opinion of the author of "Rasselas:"—"These familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions." Of similar purport is a remark made by Sir E. Bulwer Lytton:—"Some works instruct through the head, some through the heart. The last reach the widest circle, and often produce the most genial influence on the character." To compose such, a man must possess dramatic power and ease both in diction and in description; he must be a keen observer of character, and have an enthusiastic sympathy with the ever-changing phases of real life. To be the author of one of the thousand ephemeral productions written for circulating libraries by people "who turn a Persian

tale for half a crown," and minister to that depraved taste for excitement characteristic of our age, one, indeed, requires, as Fielding says, only "paper, pens, and ink, with the manual capacity of using them."

No earnest student could for a moment tolerate the "fiction clad in stupid prose," the three-volume rubbish which month after month appears for the entertainment of fashionable ladies and thoughtless apprentice lads; no sort of reading is so painfully tiresome as that of those panderers to an idle thirst for novelty, whom Cowper rebukes, in the "Progress of Error," as

"Sniv'ling and driv'ling folly without end;
Whose corresponding misses fill the ream
With sentimental flippery and dream."

Of another class, including a lamentable proportion of French works, it is only necessary to remark, as Miss Brontë did of Balzac's novels, "they leave such a bad taste in my mouth."

Let moralists condemn as severely as they choose all such trifling and pernicious fictions; but let them pause ere they use the language of censure towards those immortal works, the historic accuracy, racy humour, and elegant description of which have laid generations yet unborn under obligations to Walter Scott, and which more than any other contemporaneous writings have tended to elevate the standard of national literature, and purify the public taste.

Nor should Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's later novels be passed lightly by. Much wisdom as well as elegant

composition may be found in "The Caxtons," "My Novel," "The Last Days of Pompeii," and "Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes." Then there are "Don Quixote," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Vicar of Wakefield," and "The Arabian Nights." Austere, indeed, must be the man who would grudge to youth and beauty the happy hours spent in poring over them. The same may be said of Currer Bell's startling and graphic tales,—of those pleasing but tedious stories of Fenimore Cooper, which have found their way to so many firesides,—of Marryat's illustrations of life on the sea,—and of not a few contributions of English ladies to the romance of the present century.

Nor has America been wanting in furnishing novelists at once amusing and instructive. Longfellow's mystical "Hyperion," Fanny Fern, and the authoress of "Dred" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," have delighted thousands of readers ; and in "Mosses from an Old Manse," "The House with the Seven Gables," and "The Scarlet Letter," we find expression given to the highly-wrought visions, the vigorous original thoughts, and the poetic fire of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

There are times when even the serious and philosophic mind feels a disinclination for severer studies, —when physical weakness or mental anxiety may have rendered them undesirable, — when external circumstances prevent that close attention which they require ; on such occasions it may be exceedingly profitable to peruse what has been written by these lively exhibitors of men and manners.

Every real student knows the charms of history, and in that department the same discriminating care in selection is not required; yet, as Dr. Arnold observes, "it should ever be borne in mind that history generally looks at the political state of a nation; its social state, which is infinitely more important, and in which lie the seeds of all the greatest revolutions, is too commonly neglected or unknown." Those familiar with this branch of knowledge have often had cause to regret that the majority of historians have allowed the details of murderous battles and terrible sieges, the deeds of conquerors who have carried desolation in their path, the freaks of despots, the intrigues of unprincipled courtiers, and the explanation of military evolutions, to enjoy an almost undisputed monopoly of their pages, to the exclusion of that information concerning the moral and material well-being of the people, the discovery of useful arts, the progress of science, and the social condition of nations, which would be far more instructive to the ordinary reader than all the narratives of martial engagements from Marathon down to Waterloo.

Sir Walter Scott somewhere or other declares that "there is too much fighting in history." A preference should be given to those authors, who avoiding this error have described other scenes than those more immediately connected with "the pomp and pageantry of war." Pre-eminent among these is Lord Macaulay, who, to use his own words, aspires "to let us know how the parlours and bed-chambers

of our ancestors looked." Such works as his "Historical Essays" and his "History of England," are above the paltry criticism of reviewers: succeeding generations will be grateful for them, and they have exercised no little influence for good on the youth of the present day. They have the further advantage of being written in an elegant and interesting style. Captain Clutterbuck always "fell asleep at the fourth or fifth page of history or disquisition;" the artillery was too heavy for him. Yet, history may be made as entertaining as a novel; real life can be described in such a manner as to rivet the attention as much as romance. Without any laborious effort to shine like that which is apparent in every chapter of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and which detracts so materially from Gibbon's reputation, the writer of history may so adorn his narrative, and give to it an effect so dramatic, as to induce the school-girl to sit up half the night, and the shop-boy to read behind the counter. For example: what fiction could be more engrossing, more lifelike, and brilliantly interesting than Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella," his "Conquest of Mexico," and his "Conquest of Peru?" Ranke and Merle D'Aubigné possess likewise not a little of the painter's power; and thousands yet unborn will thank Washington Irving for his lives and historic tales, when the successors of Mahomet shall have ceased to hold Mecca, and the walls of the Alhambra have crumbled into dust.

Fairness is another quality which ought to distinguish the historian. He should be as far as

possible without bias ; capable of weighing evidence, and above using any artifices in order to magnify the exploits or hide the weaknesses of a hero. He must always be on the watch, lest his own prejudices lead him to give a false colouring either to characters or to events ; lest accuracy be sacrificed at the shrine of an excitable temperament and a fervid imagination. Mr. Hallam may be held up as a model in this respect. Reason reigns supreme in every page of "The Constitutional History of England," "The Literature of Europe," and "Europe during the Middle Ages." All great historians ought also to have regard to the moral of their tale ; to hold up worthy men and worthy deeds for imitation ; to show how intimately connected individual excellence is with national stability ; to celebrate the triumphs of peace, of art, of self-denying courage, benevolence, and skill, rather than the victories of politicians and conquerors :—in a word, to exalt virtue, though in the cottage, at the expense of vice, though on the throne ; and to write history as scripture has been written, "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Equally interesting and instructive is biography. The lives of the great and good should stimulate and encourage us to cultivate those qualities which rendered them illustrious, and enabled them to do so much for the benefit of mankind. There is one fault, however, which attaches to most works of this kind, and not only mars their usefulness, but takes away in a great measure their interest. It is what Macaulay

calls the "Lues Boswelliana, or disease of admiration!" "Paint me as I am," said Oliver Cromwell, while sitting to Sir Peter Lely; "if you leave out the scars and wrinkles I will not pay you a shilling."

These narratives are too often written by relatives or intimate friends, who consider it their duty to hide every characteristic feature and deed not worthy of praise, forgetful of their responsibility in the cause of truth. What an amount of flattery, concealment, prevarication, and false colouring might have been saved, had all writers of the lives of others weighed well the words of the great Protector! Most biographies, especially the religious portion of them, are mere eulogies, where the lights and shades of character are by no means faithfully portrayed, and the effect of which is to render nugatory the example of really good men. When only the bright side is presented, when human worthies are made to appear rather better than angels, readers declare at once that it is impossible to imitate them, and throw down the book in despair.

Writers of such panegyrics should take a lesson from the Sacred Scriptures, where the faults and failings of even the best of men are never concealed, but where their vices as well as their virtues are related with scrupulous fidelity. Voltaire remarks, in his Introduction to the "*Henriade*,"—"Ce qui doit même plaire d'avantage dans Homère, c'est que le fond de son ouvrage n'est point un roman, que les caractères ne sont point de son imagination, qu'il a peint les hommes tels qu'ils étaient, avec leurs bonnes et mau-

vaises qualités, et que son livre est un monument des mœurs de ces temps reculés." Boswell has maintained his place as the prince of biographers, just because, with all his admiration of Johnson, his narrative is so minute and conversational as to bring out into full relief the follies and sins of his hero. The weakest and vainest of men, by simply telling everything, has not only beaten his patron himself, but Plutarch, Alfieri, and Voltaire. There is often as much difference between the hero of a "Life" and the real man, as between a first-class portrait and a caricature. Truly has Dr. Johnson said, that "more knowledge may be gained of a man's character by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative begun with his pedigree and ended with his funeral."

There is something peculiarly humanizing, elevating, and ennobling in Poetry. It refines the taste, rubs off roughnesses of character, and brings man into more immediate connection with that nature over which, as a monarch, he is enthroned, and with Him from whom he derives his being, and in whose gracious revelation we have the earliest and grandest efforts of the heavenly Muse. No species of writing exercises such a lasting influence as song; none procures for its authors such an enduring reputation. The "Iliad" has been read and admired for so many centuries, that the story of its composition has been lost in the obscurity of ages; Virgil still occupies a foremost place in libraries and schoolrooms, although eighteen hundred years have passed since the

Augustan period of Roman literature ; instead of tarnishing, time only adds new lustre to the "Paradise Lost ;" and the odes of Campbell will be recited with delight and enthusiasm, as long as the grass grows green on the field of Hohenlinden, and the bulwarks of Britannia breast the billows of the deep. Dr. Johnson remarked of Gray's ode, "On a distant prospect of Eton College :"—"The poem abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo." The same might with equal propriety be said of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," of Beattie's "Minstrel," of Grahame's "Sabbath," of Campbell's "Lines on a Scene in Argyleshire," of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," of Longfellow's "Voices of the Night," and of Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night."

The true poet wanders over universal nature, and dives into the inmost recesses of man's character ; his moral feelings and intellectual powers are brought into full play. While giving the reins to his imagination, he must address the reason as well as the passions of men, and, in order to attain to the highest pinnacle of the temple of fame, to preserve his influence over mankind, and be held in enduring remembrance, he must celebrate virtue, and worship purity and truth. A large proportion of the noblest poetry, indeed, has not only been on the side of morality, but has had a sacred and religious tendency. To say nothing of the songs and odes of the Bible, the lofty utterances of Moses, David, and Isaiah, we have Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained,"

Blair's "Grave," Young's "Night Thoughts," the "Divina Commedia," and "Gerusalemme Liberata." Yet, after these poems appeared, an idea became prevalent that there is something antagonistic between poetry and religion, and, strange to say, Dr. Johnson gave to it the sanction of his high authority; but lest the existence of the works just named should not have been considered sufficient to disprove it, a crowd of men possessed of a like spirit have since arisen. Cowper led the way. Following Pope, Prior, and Dryden, he did for poetry what Addison did for prose, and Scott for romance; and Pollock, Grahame, Montgomery, Coleridge, and the Lakers followed rapidly in his footsteps. These and others have made no secret of their earnest belief in Christianity. Their verse is highly spiritual, and points straight upwards to heaven. With one accord they call upon creation to praise and magnify the Lord.

But there is another school, into which, however, the student who can give a reason for the faith that is in him need not fear to enter. The daring impiety of Shelley is no sufficient reason for not becoming acquainted with the numerous pieces of a man who could write "The Cloud;" and that person who, in this enlightened age, has never read the best of Byron's works must, even by the most charitably inclined, be set down as only half educated. One may be excused for declining to peruse "Don Juan" and "Cain," but crabbed and commonplace must be the mind which does not derive pleasure from the glorious poetry abounding in "Childe Harold," "The

Giaour," "The Corsair," "Lara," "The Siege of Corinth," and "The Bride of Abydos."

The trouble of mastering Italian will be amply compensated by the enjoyment to be derived from the verse of Dante, Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarca, and Metastasio. In Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso" especially, amid much that is vapid and dull, and a little that is objectionable, you occasionally stumble upon passages in which the most sublime ideas are enthroned in diction of startling magnificence. Dante, like Milton, was a library of learning. Years of laborious study peep out through every page of the "Divina Commedia" as well as the "Paradise Lost." In fine, the words in which Pope apostrophises the poets of the old world in his "Essay on Criticism" are equally applicable to those of later days.

"Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands,
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.
See from each clime the learned their incense bring!
Hear in all tongues consenting pæans ring!
In praise so just, let every voice be joined,
And fill the general chorus of mankind.
Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
Nations unborn your mighty name shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found."

POLITICAL LIBERTY.

WITHOUT discussing the relative merits of various forms of government, or minutely entering upon the consideration of particular laws, it may not be unprofitable, at the present moment, when there seems to be a general lull in politics, to turn our thoughts to the nature and the effects of true liberty. School-boys in Great Britain are encouraged to write essays on the superior advantages of constitutional hereditary monarchy; in the United States of America, they celebrate the praises of republicanism; in Austria, they laud a paternal absolutism, as the most excellent system under which man may dwell, and in all three cases the merits of opposing plans are carefully left out of view. One, however, who has lived a little longer in the world, and read history with a less prejudiced and better regulated mind, especially if he has had opportunities of studying men and manners in other countries but his own, soon arrives at the conclusion that freedom does not depend entirely on forms; that very im-

perfect frameworks have often enclosed a machine moving with wondrous harmony, and that much may with reason be said in favour even of a despotism.

The seeds of tyranny find in the human heart a soil so congenial, that system-mongers and statesmen have as yet failed to produce any scheme of government which prevents them springing up and bearing fruit; while the love of liberty on the other hand is so natural, that no physical power has hitherto been able, to a certain extent at least, to check its development. Political oppression is every day practised in New York, as well as in Moscow. It requires the utmost efforts of monarchs, armies, priests, and diplomatists, to smother the flames of revolution in Italy. The English lover of liberty may learn lessons in continental capitals; the foreign admirer of order may perambulate with profit the streets of London. The mobocracy of America exercises as crushing an influence as the bureaucracy of Germany; at the same time the events of 1848, proved incontestibly that absolutism and order are by no means convertible terms. No Utopia has yet appeared in politics any more than in morals; the mechanism of plans for rule may be too perfect for man with his limited amount of knowledge and tendencies to err, as well as too rude for him, considering the advances which he has made in science and education.

Since the lamentable failure of revolutionary France to show men a bright example of government on purely popular principles, without reference

to ancient landmarks or time-honoured prejudices, and more especially, since the deplorable break-down of all the constitutions inaugurated in Germany during the troubles of 1848, there has been less disposition to theorise and indulge in mere speculation. It now seems pretty generally understood that it is much easier to pull down than to build up again: as luxuries and comforts, which were once confined to the wealthy, begin to be enjoyed by working people; as life and property become more secure, the masses feel more and more disinclined to risk present advantages, for any uncertain benefits to be found under a new *régime*; and every year adds to the number of those who agree with Sir James Stephen, that "the real test of political wisdom is in the production of the greatest attainable amount of good, by means of those organs of government which habit has made familiar, and which antiquity has rendered venerable."

We need not expect that this doctrine will obtain universal acquiescence, or that talkers and writers will not be found in every age so much in love with some scheme of their own, as to believe only evil of every other plan. Hobbes, no mean authority, describes a wise and just despotism as the perfection of political society; authors of equal note have impressed upon the world the blessings to be derived from what Burke calls "a geometrical and arithmetical constitution;" and the Marquis of Rockingham was, no doubt correct, when he said, that "abstract principles, theoretically right, will furnish

matter for disputation in the schools of Utopia till time is no more;" but experience teaches us that in the management of states we must consider habit and prejudice, tradition and history, associations and actual condition, as well as axiomatic truths and human rights, and that what appears in the abstract to be perfect, oftentimes is in reality unworkable and absurd. Government was instituted and exists for the benefit of the people, and if that can be promoted in a great degree by the voluntary surrender on the part of any portion of privileges, which, in strict metaphysical justice, may belong to them, it would be strange Quixotism to oppose the arrangement as adverse to natural law. An American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, remarks with much force in one of his novels, that "no sagacious man will long retain his sagacity, if he live exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning into the settled system of things to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint." The fact is, that the mental idiosyncracies of some men incline them constantly to apply the drag to the chariot wheels of progress; others are too apt to drive like Jehu, the son of Nemshi, furiously, forgetful that the happiness of a nation is not necessarily brought about by any particular forms of administration; and that the most beneficent laws, the noblest charters of right, and the most perfectly-constituted representative assemblies, have not always conferred upon the multitude the inestimable blessings of good government; while that

has been obtained, in not a few instances, under systems which no logician would take up his pen to defend. Great disasters have happened, and great crimes have been committed, because politicians have not taken care to distinguish between the means and the end. M. Dumont, himself a republican, in his preface to the "Treatise on the Principles of Legislation," says, "M. Bentham est bien loin d'attacher une préférence exclusive à aucune forme de gouvernement. Il pense que la meilleure constitution pour un peuple est celle à laquelle il est accoutumé."

True liberty resembles not the parasitical plant of the tropical forest, which springs into maturity in a day, without strength of fibre to sustain more than a brief existence, but the oak and elm of temperate latitudes, which grow slowly, until they acquire sufficient strength to defy the power of no ordinary tempest. Take, as an example, the political edifice in which we Britons dwell. How much labour was bestowed upon its foundations; how many struggles and sacrifices did its preservation and adornment necessitate; what an army of architects have been at one time or another employed in constructing portions of it; what a number of generations have helped to render it stately, defensible, and complete in all its arrangements! And yet, so far from having grown to its present dimensions with rapidity, the careful student of history will be surprised to find how few stories have been added to it since the time of the Plantagenets, and he will remark, that at various periods unsuccessful experiments were tried; stones

were placed in position which had to be taken down again, some permanently, because found altogether unsuitable, others only for a time until the structure was able to bear them.

It is remarkable, also, that some of the most material changes occurred almost imperceptibly, without any theoretical alteration, any popular commotion, or any definite law. Such, for example, was the virtual transference of supreme power from the sovereign to the House of Commons, which has produced effects far more important both to Great Britain and the world than any revolution which ever happened, however celebrated and momentous at the time.

Indeed, violent organic changes are not calculated to advance the cause of true freedom,—

“Never came reformation in a flood,
With such a heady current, scouring faults.”

Even England gained little or nothing by the overthrow of her monarchy and the execution of Charles. No one now doubts, it is true, the admirable qualities of Cromwell, or the exaltation of this country under his sway; but, then, to him succeeded a base, licentious tyrant, the slave and pensioner of the French monarch; and a nation of freemen, valiant for truth, seemed suddenly transferred into one of subservient flatterers of vice enthroned. The history of France for the last seventy years, and of Europe in general for the last ten, is a sad commentary on the most frequent result of revolutionary efforts. Undoubt-

edly, there are circumstances in which forcible resistance becomes not only allowable, but a duty; when to submit is to entail upon your country evils worse than war; when the patient and the good are driven, in despair, to take the sword against the oppressor, and by an act of signal retribution proclaim to mankind that tyranny has its bounds; but, as a rule, that policy has not been successful; on the contrary, it has, in the majority of instances, strengthened the hands of despots and riveted their subjects' chains. To overthrow entirely an existing government must of necessity be a dangerous experiment under any circumstances; if the people be ignorant, unprincipled, and irreligious, the danger is increased tenfold.

When the Abbé Sièyes remonstrated with Mirabeau against some conspicuous act of bad faith on the part of the assembly, the latter replied: "My dear abbé, you have unloosed the bull; do you expect he is not to make use of his horns?" Nor will any one who has considered well the state of knowledge and of morals among the great mass of mankind, be surprised that violent revolutions should have led, in most instances, directly to anarchy and every description of license. And then what follows? The multitude, exhausted with their own excesses, and disgusted with the folly and wickedness of their leaders, long for repose; some popular military commander, who stands well with the soldiery and knows the power of discipline, seizes his opportunity, strikes a decisive blow, and to a false liberty succeeds an iron

despotism. The general either himself ascends the throne, or he restores the discomfited monarch. Napoleon Buonaparte and Marshal Radetsky have both, in this respect, given lessons to Europe. The enemies of tyranny ought, moreover, to be always on their watch against mere demagogues

“That bawl for freedom in their senseless moods,
And still revolt when truth would set them free ;
License they mean when they cry liberty.”

Dr. Johnson never said a truer or a happier thing than when at a dinner of *the club* in a tavern, he suddenly exclaimed, “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” Who has not shuddered as he read of the deeds and studied the characters of Danton, Robespierre, and Marat ? Is not their career painfully illustrative of how easily a mob can be beguiled and betrayed ? There are several varieties of this class on which we should keep our eye. First, we have the excitable, vehement spirits, who, without any dishonest purpose, are governed by

“The poor and purblind rage
Of innovation, that but aggravates
The weight o’ the fetters which it cannot break.”

Then there are deeper, more designing, men, “caterpillars of the commonwealth,” as Shakspeare calls them, who always manage to conceal their designs behind the persons of others,—who leave simple tools to their fate in the hour of disaster,—who live on the

earnings of their victims,—who would advocate any principles for the sake of money and power, and who, with their plots and their trade in deluding the ignorant, have rendered many an infant fatherless, and many a wife a widow. Their business is

“Each novice to trepan,
And call the wants of rogues the rights of man.”

And lastly, we have an inferior crew, noxious in their way, as bringing discredit on the cause of liberty, yet almost to be pitied as much as blamed. They are aptly described by two verses of an old song :—

“A patriot was my occupation,
It got me a name but no pelf ;
Till, starved for the good of the nation,
I begg’d for the good of myself.

“I told them, if ’twas not for me,
Their freedoms would all go to pot ;
I promised to set them all free,
But never a farthing I got.”

In proportion to the diffusion of sound instruction amongst the people, the influence exercised by these various classes of agitators will be diminished ; and where a nation is not educated, and has little or no sense of moral or religious duty, liberty of political action is almost certain to be abused. “If,” says Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, “the breast be uneducated, the gift may curse the giver ; and he who passes at once from the slave to the freeman, may pass as rapidly from

the freeman to the ruffian." A multitude, if they are to be intrusted with power, must have at least a certain amount of wisdom and virtue, else they will act and feel precisely as did the Parisian populace when Lafayette endeavoured to enforce order, and was saluted with cries of "Is this our liberty? We can no longer hang whom we please."

All violent revolutions that have taken place under similar circumstances, and the conduct of men suddenly enfranchised without knowledge and religious principle, everywhere prove to us how true are the poet's words,—

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside."

At the same time, if a people are to be subjected to a despotism until they are in every respect fitted to exercise political privileges, there is little likelihood of that time ever coming. The system of bondage under which they live prevents the development of their understandings; and until they have served a sort of apprenticeship under free institutions, they must needs in any case fall into grave errors. The surest mode, however, to undermine a tyrannical government is to educate the masses. A well-instructed nation will not submit to the exactions of arbitrary power, as Akenside happily says in his "Pleasures of Imagination :"—

"Where Truth deigns to come,
Her sister, Liberty, will not be far."

It is remarkable, moreover, that just as a people become better instructed, they more and more appreciate the golden mean between a desire for great organic changes, and an indisposition to meddle with things as they are. The majority of Britons now-a-days are contented gradually to improve their institutions year by year, taking every good within their reach, yet always aspiring to something better, thankfully accepting instalments, but never fully satisfied. No one who has studied history with care will be disposed to deny that plans which operated most beneficially in one century have frequently shown themselves very unsuitable to the next, or even that what advanced the cause of progress at one time seriously retarded it at another. We learn, therefore, that while violent alteration commonly leads to a reaction, and does not promote advancement, there must be gradual reformation or danger to national existence. If clamant grievances be not redressed,—if excessive dissatisfaction be not removed by concession, the vessel of the state may naturally drift into a whirlpool, and be dashed to pieces almost before the peril is known.

Slow and steady improvement seems the safe course for nations, as, indeed, it is the law of nature and of nature's God. The sapling grows into the forest tree; the bud opens into the flower; streaks of light in the east precede the sun; twilight gives warning of the approach of night; the moderate temperature of spring prepares us for the heat of summer; and grim winter is ushered in by bracing autumn airs.

Representative government no doubt affords the best guarantee for this policy being pursued. "La multitude," says Pascal, "qui ne se réduit pas à l'unité est confusion ; l'unité qui n'est pas multitude est tyrannie."

In former times, and wherever feudalism existed, the people were of no account at all. That system has been called a "protracted reign of terror ;" and certainly we find it everywhere opposed both to order and liberty, encouraging rapaciousness and strife, throwing obstacles in the way of industry and the progress of science, and reducing the multitude to a level with the oxen which ploughed the land, or at best rendering them passive instruments for carrying on the unjust wars of their lords. Nor is the social condition of the masses in many European countries at the present day one whit more enviable. Lord Holland remarked, many years ago, that, "there is no scheme of government in which the laws of God and nature are so necessarily violated, and in which practically those of mankind are so frequently subverted, as in hereditary despotism." The Siamese word for reigning, we are told, literally means devouring the people.

It is impossible for any one to travel widely on the continent without entering fully into the spirit of both these observations. The waste howling wilderness around Rome, the treeless calcined plains of Castile, the beggars of Naples, the sullen countenances of the Venetian Lombards, the swarming white coats of Austria, the miserable abodes and

unpalatable bread of Russian serfs, all testify to a state of society at variance with the beneficent designs of Providence, and loudly calling for reform. Shelley had travelled much in Italy, and well might he exclaim,—

“Ye princes of the earth, ye sit aghast,
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made.”

And since his time we have seen instances of baseness and perjury on the part of monarchs, positively awful to contemplate. We have seen one who professes to be the vicegerent of the Almighty swearing falsely; a neighbour sovereign casting into loathsome dungeons counsellors whose crime was that they had done his bidding; and a grand duke sacrificing first the instruments of his tyranny and then the saviours of his throne. And even in countries where no such abominations exist, where a semblance of liberty has been kept up—in Holland, Belgium, Bavaria, Wirtemberg, Prussia, and France, there is a total absence of that loyal feeling which bursts into loud acclaim whenever the queen of England shows herself in public, whether to the inhabitants of her capital, the workmen of Yorkshire, or the mountaineers who guard her Scottish home. It makes one tremble to think what in all human probability will be the consequence of that system of functionary management and military surveillance which is sapping the foundations of self-reliance, natural healthy sentiment, sincere religion, and domestic happiness from one end of Europe to the other.

The people have no sympathy with or respect for their rulers, consequently they are always in a state of incipient revolt; and as by education they are debarred from obtaining any knowledge of the administration of affairs, and discouraged from even thinking of politics, in a time of convulsion they listen readily to every enthusiast and schemer whom agitation brings to the surface. Then they have been trained to consider the cause of social tranquillity and order as no business of theirs. In Great Britain, should a riot take place, every second shopkeeper turns out as a special constable. On the continent, no one dreams of any authority except that of galloping dragoons and cannons pointed down the streets. Where an immense militia force has been organized, as in Prussia, the bulk of the population, indeed, become theoretically interested in the defence of public security; but they feel the demand upon their time and tax upon their labour to be a grievous burden; and instead of being trustworthy soldiers are only discontented subjects acquainted with the use of the musket and the sword. The crowned heads abroad must after all rely on their standing armies, and they know very well that no insurrection has succeeded in modern times except those in which that force joined the insurgents. Both in France and in Austria the army is the reigning power. Between kings and people there is a great gulf fixed, and the military possess the only bridge which spans it. The French keep on foot about half a million of men; the Austrians have nearly as many, and what with Tartars and

Cossacks the Russians muster two or three hundred thousand more. The Mahomedan princes of Asia and Africa pursue the same course. Europe, in fact, bristles with bayonets. As long as this is the case need we expect to see her free?

More than one hundred years ago Mr. Pulteney exclaimed,—“A standing army is still a standing army, whatever name it be called by. They are a body of men distinct from the body of the people. They are governed by different laws; blind obedience and an entire submission to the orders of their commanding officer is their only principle. The nations around us are already enslaved, and have been enslaved by those very means. By means of their standing armies they have every one lost their liberties.”

And whither tends this multiplication of idle unproductive men, subtracted from industrial employments, and prevented from adding to national wealth? Undoubtedly to national bankruptcy. The sums paid for the maintenance of the bureaucracy and the military abroad are enormous. If the system be persisted in much longer it must lead to revolution and ruin. Where a government is obliged to pay an immense force, not for defence against external foes but for protection against their own subjects, it must replenish the exchequer by oppressive taxation, and when that reaches its limit the catastrophe is inevitable.

Great Britain, with her vast possessions in India, and her dependencies in every part of the globe, requires to maintain a considerable army; but it will

be an evil day for us should we, from dread of invasion or any other reason, create a force like that which is eating into the very vitals of neighbouring states.

Priestcraft has likewise proved itself a powerful ally to continental despotism. Not only in Roman Catholic countries, but in Protestant countries as well, religion has been employed as an engine of government. Its ministers have degraded themselves into functionaries, and the consequence has been serious damage to both Christianity and liberty.

Between the Straits of Gibraltar and the Baltic Sea, Sardinia is the only nation where monarch and people seem to have discovered their true interest. In all others the multitude have been so tutored in the school of absolutism that they vibrate between passive obedience and a frantic desire for organic change; while their rulers seem to feel very much as did Francis II. of Austria, who, when told by his medical man that he had a good constitution, ordered him never to again to mention that word in his presence. "There is no such thing as a good constitution: I have no constitution, and will never have one." It is incredible that this policy can be successful in the end, or even that for many years men like those who inhabit Germany, France, Tuscany, and Venetian-Lombardy will submit to it. In districts still semi-civilised, like Calabria, Croatia, and the interior of Russia, there may be comparatively little desire for reform, and small capacity to work free institutions; but Milan and Florence are too

near Turin, Paris and Berlin are in too frequent communication with London to prevent that interchange of sentiment which is gall and wormwood to tyrants, that manifestation of the force of example which, as the world becomes more enlightened, waxes stronger every day.*

Let us now examine a little more closely the comparative effects of despotism and liberty on the governed. The influence of the former on mind, on manners and morals, on civilization, on social happiness, and on national prosperity, may be stated in a very few sentences.

The ignorance and incompetence of the people has been a favourite theme of tyrants in all ages, and in the nineteenth century the parasites who surround continental thrones never cease talking of the unfitness of all beneath them for political business. Nor is their accusation altogether devoid of truth, for when men are not permitted to exercise their understandings or take any part whatever in affairs, they gradually become mere machines, their intellect chained, their feelings benumbed by hard treatment, their sense of responsibility deadened, their spirit crushed by the yoke, and their whole mental nature degraded; having no right to enjoy an opinion, they cease to think deeply; length of servitude destroys all energy of mind.

Mr. Spencer, in his work on European Turkey, remarks on the intelligence of the Bosnian peasant

* These sentences were written in 1858.

in comparison with individuals of the same class in Western Central Europe, and he attributes it to "his being obliged to examine and decide for himself, and take a part in the discussion of the concerns of the community of which he is a member;" whereas his neighbours are allowed no such liberty, their paternal governments thinking and acting for them. What gigantic strides in all kinds of knowledge have been made in Great Britain and the United States of America, contrasted with countries not blessed with representative government! Nor is this at all wonderful—

"For what is freedom but the unfetter'd use
Of all the powers which God for use had given."

Deprived of the rights of manhood, the privilege of thinking and acting for themselves in political and religious matters, the masses on the continent are driven to a perpetual round of amusement, an incessant pleasure-hunting, which their rulers encourage by all means in their power. A Russian officer, in the Ural mountains, remarked to a recent traveller, who took notice of the continual card-playing going on wherever he went, "In England, you have the daily papers, the monthly periodicals, a literature unequalled, and the liberty of discussing every subject with freedom: if we had such things to occupy our minds, we should not care for cards."

Champfort spoke of the French monarchy in a former age, as a "despotism tempered by songs;" and it has always been the policy of absolute courts to

keep the people amused, that they might have no time for reflection. Music and theatricals in Germany, military pageants in France, bull-fights in Spain, church festivals and carnivals in Italy, are the agents used by tyrants for preventing their subjects from emerging out of childhood and asserting the dignity of their nature. Nor are there wanting persons among ourselves who desire to see the British more of a pleasure-seeking people, and sigh when they think of those happy medieval times when peasants and artisans knew nothing of politics, and could not even read, but spent all their leisure moments in plays and dances.

A certain section of our upper classes, benevolent in their way, fair-spoken and highly accomplished, but greatly alarmed in their hearts at the progress of intelligence amongst the humbler orders of society, are attempting, by means of a zealous agitation in favour of time being given for, and every encouragement afforded to sports, to draw the attention of the working men away from matters concerning government, and so to prevent ancient and cherished abuses meeting their certain doom. When the masses of Britain desert their lecture-room and the public-meeting for the cricket-ground and the tea-garden, they will be unworthy of the yeomen who fought at Crecy and Poitiers, of the statesmen who brought over William of Orange, and of the burghers who have made their country by a succession of successful political battles the freest and best-governed in all the world.

The influence of despotism on morals is not less apparent than it is on mind. No doubt it works slowly, time being required to alter national habits; but when the bulk of a nation lose their self-respect, submitting daily to arrogance and wrong, they become in the very nature of things, either the mere slaves of sensual pleasures, effeminate and soulless, like the subjects of eastern monarchies, or corrupted and depraved specimens of mankind, like too many of the actors in late revolutions abroad, whom the example of their own governments taught to despise human life and the rights of property, who, seeing kings and courtiers breaking every law of Heaven, outraging justice and humanity, and filling dungeons with their victims every day, could scarcely be expected to do otherwise, when power was given them, than follow in the footsteps of their betters. It is of a people in this state, driven by tyranny to licentiousness, that Livy says, "*Nec vitia nostra, nec remedia pati possumus.*" Purity of morals on the part of a nation cannot coexist with despotism. A people of lofty principle can exercise their rights as freemen to advantage, and they will assert them. Man's nature is not in the least changed since Homer said, that he who loses his liberty loses half his virtue.

Nor can real civilization advance, no matter how fair the outward show, in a country where the people are destitute of civil privileges, subjected to all kinds of vexatious requirements, and liable to arbitrary exercise of power. Among the Ansayrii the sheikhs of government are generally called sheikhs of op-

pression. Some such title would be exceedingly appropriate to that army of bureaucrats who are treading out the sparks of liberty, and bringing about a retrograde movement in most European states.

As to the excesses that have been committed by the multitude when suddenly released from the gripe of despotism, they are not to be mentioned in the same breath with the sufferings endured by the victims of tyranny. More cruelty is perpetrated in a single year in the dungeons of absolute monarchs abroad, than the mobs of revolutionary capitals have committed since the Reformation. Mr. Gladstone, in his well-known letter to Lord Aberdeen, with reference to the State Trials at Naples in 1850, states, "I believe that twenty thousand is no unreasonable estimate of the prisoners for political offences in the kingdom of the Two Sicilies." It is impossible for any one to travel in lands under a tyrannical sway, and not to be reminded at every step in his path, in a thousand different ways, that

" 'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume ;
And we are weeds without it."

The effects of the two systems on national greatness and prosperity is a most interesting theme.

A nation, to submit to tyranny, must be weak and corrupt ; the same elements that constitute freedom constitute stability and power.

"The character of the bravest and most virtuous among nations," says Mr. Hallam, "has not depended upon the accidents of race or climate, but been gradually wrought by the plastic influence of civil rights, transmitted as a prescriptive inheritance through a long course of generations." Sir John Bowring, in his recently-published work on "Siam," tells a story strikingly illustrative of the truth and universal acceptance of this remark. "Phraklang, the king's minister, asked an English gentleman who visited him in 1855, the cause of the English having such power and influence, and was answered that they owed it to their insular position, and their descent from a race of mingled Saxons, Normans, and Celts. His Excellency burst out indignantly—'No! it is neither their position, advantageous as it doubtless is, nor the men, though brave as lions, that has raised them to their present position. Other nations have had the same opportunities in situation, and have had brave soldiers, yet they never held their ground like the English. It is their government, that admirable form of administration, which is held in equal balance by the king, by the nobles, by the people; that government in which every man feels that he has a certain share;—that country in which he feels that his interest is cared for.'"

The histories of Greece and Rome, bear striking evidence to the effect of free institutions on national prosperity. As soon as Athens and Sparta lost their liberties, they lost their reputation and power; the encroachments of emperors weakened that mighty

empire which the *Senatus Populusque* reared; three centuries ago the municipal and representative privileges enjoyed by Castile and Aragon, placed Spain at the head of European kingdoms—an Austrian dynasty, ever inimical to popular rights, took them away, and down fell the whole superstructure; the monarchy which sent out Columbus and conquered Mexico, and dictated laws at once to Europe and Peru, now lies a stranded wreck on the sea of national politics, and no one can foretell what will be the effect of the next potential wave.

How true, as well as inspiriting, are the well-known lines in “Moore’s Irish Melodies”:—

“Yes, ’tis not helm nor feather—
For ask yon despot, whether
His plumed bands
Could bring such hands
And hearts as ours together.

Leave pomps to those who need ’em,
Give man but heart and freedom,
And proud he braves
The gaudiest slaves
That crawl where monarchs lead ’em.

The sword may pierce the beaver,
Stone walls in time may sever,
’Tis mind alone,
Worth steel and stone,
That keeps men free for ever.”

No careful reader of history can have failed to remark the connection between the seacoast and liberty. Prescott, remarking on the higher degree of civilization displayed by the ancient country of

Barcelona, says—"The seaboard would seem to be the natural seat of liberty. There is something in the very presence, in the atmosphere of the ocean, which invigorates not only the physical but the moral energies of man." Certainly, the histories of Great Britain, of Holland, of Denmark, of Genoa, and of Venice, confirm this observation. A people trading on the mighty deep become inured to hardship and peril; they acquire knowledge not within the reach of those shut out from the great highway, and their intercourse with distant countries adds to their wealth. Even the inhabitants of districts near the mouths of navigable rivers manifest a greater sense of independence than those living further inland. Feudal barons and absolute monarchs have never flourished near the outlets of the Weser, the Elbe, and the Rhine.

Mountainous lands seem also the natural home of liberty. Their climate and scenery render their inhabitants hardy and fearless, active and energetic, regardless of danger, and confident in their own resources. Of how many men who have fought on the hills of Scotland, of Switzerland, of Biscay, and of the Tyrol might we say, as Coleridge says of William Tell,—

"God gave him reverence of laws,
Yet stirred his blood in Freedom's cause;
A spirit to the rocks akin,
The eye of the hawk, and the fire therein."

he state of Europe at the present time would

seem to offer but faint encouragement to the hopes of those who look forward with confidence to the extension of representative institutions, and the admission of the people to a share in the government of their respective countries. Those chiefly interested in the maintenance of the present *régime* have been drawing the reins tighter than ever. Their triumph has been for the moment complete; everywhere there is apparently a crouching to fate, and a dead political calm.* But such a stillness often precedes the tempest, and in other parts of the continent besides Italy men understand the words, "Lo mormorito quietamente suonava." States are frequently in the greatest danger when there is a total absence of the visible signs of discontent. In politics as well as religion men can become hypocrites for a purpose, and in many instances before now rebellious designs have been concealed under the garb of uncomplaining loyalty. "This," says Isaac Taylor, "is the ordinary course of events, when the redress of old abuses is in progress, the partisans of corruption go on triumphing to their fall." That the prospects of political liberty are at present clouded no one can deny; but to a system of absolutism, like that now dominant, the noblest and most influential feelings of the human breast are opposed; and in an age when knowledge is being so rapidly extended, vain, eventually, must be the attempt of an exclusive few to govern by the force of terror. Attentive

* Written in 1858.

observers of events have no difficulty in appreciating the warning given in Byron's lines :—

“But never mind, ‘God save the king’ and kings !
For if *He* don't, I doubt if men will longer.
I think I hear a little bird, who sings,
The people by and by will be the stronger.”

Really, it seems as if the rulers of some continental countries, led on by a fatal impulse, were bent on driving their subjects to despair. To impartial spectators the consequence is obvious. Even the worm has turned when trodden on, and monarchs who fancied themselves beyond the reach of disaster have learned by sad experience in every age “how much the wretched dare.” As soon as oppression reaches a certain height it oversteps the limits of safety, and those limits are often not visible to governors flattered by sycophants and intoxicated with power. Nature abhors intolerable abuse as much as she does a vacuum, and Providence sometimes very suddenly and unexpectedly, in a way which the most far-seeing men would never have anticipated, has brought the career of tyrants to an inglorious close. The greater the tension on a people the greater will be the recoil. Governments which do not rest on popular sympathy, must in the nature of things be precarious. Had the Aztec kingdom been founded on the affections of the multitude, Cortes had never penetrated with such ease into the halls of Montezuma : had the later Roman emperors not been guilty of cruelty and oppression,

the northern hordes had never made Italy a prey : had the Stuarts confined their treachery and tyranny within decent bounds, their descendants might yet have been seated on the British throne : had the first Napoleon not carefully excluded popular opinion from reaching him, he might never have marched to Moscow or sailed to St. Helena. The state of Europe at this moment reminds us forcibly of lines written by Chatterton, himself a child of misfortune :—

“This truth of old was sorrow’s friend—
Times at the worst will surely mend ;
The difficulty’s then to know
How long oppression’s clock can go.”

Nor, when one thinks calmly about it, is there anything to justify the sense of security said to be felt by neighbouring despots. Dr. Johnson remarked, with great truth, that “the more contracted power is, the more easily it is destroyed. A country governed by a despot is an inverted cone.”

In England and the United States of America pre-eminently,—in Sardinia, Norway, and some other states in a lesser degree, every man feels that he has a stake in his country ; and should that country be threatened by a foreign army, the nation would rise *en masse* to repel the invader. But who can say the same of lands slumbering in the starless night of despotism ? Their inhabitants have nothing to defend ; any change would be welcome to them. They would gladly dispel the darkness of their lot by the torch of revolution, and even hail aliens in race and language

as their saviours from an intolerable gloom. How far the Anglo-Saxon commonwealths on both sides of the Atlantic owe their light and liberties to an earnest Protestant Christianity might form the subject of a separate and most interesting inquiry.

OVERRULING PROVIDENCE.

"PROVIDENCE," says Sir Walter Raleigh, "is an intellectual knowledge, both foreseeing, caring for, and ordering all things, and doth not only behold all past, all present, and all to come, but is the cause of their so being, which prescience is not." Of course, only an omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient Being could exercise a superintendence of this sort. *That* Jehovah is not simply Creator, but conservator, ruler, and director; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." According to the "Shorter Catechism" of the Presbyterian Church, "God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions." Over mankind He exerts a supreme control, rendering all our doings subservient to His wise designs. The inferior animals are no less directly influenced by Him:—"Are not two sparrows," said our Saviour, "sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father?" This supervision and interference extends

to inanimate objects as well: — the seasons, the winds, the trees, and flowers, all bear daily homage to the authority of an Eternal King. "There is a purpose," says Isaiah, "purposed upon the whole earth; there is a hand stretched out upon all the nations." This is something very different from mere occasional interpositions of Divine Power, mere convulsive efforts of that arm which moves the universe. God permits no existence without His sanction; the most trivial action requires His concurrence; His regulative energy is everywhere apparent, continuous, and sustained. He does more than repair the machine when out of gear, or lend His aid to prevent a catastrophe, or give signal examples of retributive justice: the minutest material particle receives an impulse from above; He sees, and understands, and arranges everything according to His good pleasure. No "atoms dance disordered" in His creation; there is no such thing as "blind chance." That there are mysteries in the Divine mode of working no one need deny: finite beings cannot be expected to comprehend either the purposes of the Infinite, or the manner in which He effects them. The existence of sin is itself a fact which transcends human intelligence, an enigma which shall puzzle polemics till the end of time. Why an Almighty Creator, perfectly holy, good, and pure, should tolerate rebellion against Himself, wide-spread iniquity, oppression, and impurity, it would be in vain for us to attempt to explain. It is our capacity, not God's wisdom, which is at fault; and without question He has a suffi-

cient reason for not allowing us to understand, as Shakspeare says,—

“Those mysteries which Heaven
Will not have earth to know.”

We may be at a loss to interpret the handwriting of the Creator on nature's wall,—to conceive why old ocean, lashed into fury, should be permitted to swallow up valuable cargoes and useful men,—why fearful accidents should be suffered to take place, hurrying hundreds into eternity,—why wars, and superstition, and slavery, and pestilence, and crime should be allowed to desolate the earth. The presumptuous man, pondering on these things, instead of taking into account the limitation of his own intellect, proceeds at once to deny the Almighty's sovereignty or goodness, to

“Rejudge the justice, be the god of God.”

The humble Christian derives from such considerations a deeper sense of his own ignorance, and a more earnest desire to repose a childlike confidence in the Divine government.

It may not be unprofitable to consider for a little some of the manifestations of an overruling Providence which history and experience supply. Although it is quite true that God's hand fashions and regulates everything, that not an apple falls to the ground, not a leaf sweeps along with the wintry wind, not a drop swells the river without His permission; and ~~it is true, that~~ clouds and darkness often

hide His doings, that many things occur apparently inconsistent with the general design of His administration,—it is equally true that very signal and unusual displays of Providential interference do once and again arrest the attention, and that flashes of light do now and then pierce the gloom of His more mysterious dispensations.

The merest accident, the most trifling occurrence, we all know, has often brought about results of the greatest importance to mankind. Every instance of this sort appears to me an argument for, an illustration of the deep interest, the direct interposition of God in the affairs of men. Scarcely any one but can remember some trivial circumstance, apparently fortuitous, really providential, which affected more or less influentially his whole subsequent history. A slight illness, a casual rencontre, a change of weather, a gust of wind, a slip of the foot, have often changed the whole current of a man's life, and by so doing affected the destiny of nations and the interests of the world. A living poet thus beautifully alludes to that of which every reflecting person must have at one time or another been conscious :—

“ On such slight hinges an existence turns !
How frequent, in the very thick of life,
We rub clothes with a fate that hurries past !
A tiresome friend detains us on the street ;
We part, and turning, meet fate in the teeth.
A moment more or less had 'voided it.”*

* “A Life Drama,” by Alex. Smith.

John Howard, the philanthropist, was anxious to have entered parliament. "A minority of four voices only," says his biographer, "saved the benefactor of the world from falling into the position of a commonplace representative of a petty provincial town." For the sake of the duty on tea, amounting to £16,000 per annum, Great Britain lost her American colonies; and what is more remarkable still, the resolution to maintain that tax was only carried in the cabinet of Lord North by a majority of one, the Prime Minister and the leader of the House of Commons both being in the minority.* It was the singing of vespers in the temple of Jupiter at Rome, by the bare-footed friars, that first started in the mind of Gibbon the idea of writing his great history. The wound inflicted on Ignatius Loyola, at the siege of Pampeluna, originated the order of the Jesuits. "The Lives of the Saints" fell into his hands during his confinement, and fired his imagination with an ambition to found a religious fraternity. Chatterton in his earliest years was thought incorrigibly dull, if not foolish—an old French illuminated manuscript in his mother's possession, at once seemed to open up his mental faculties. The same effect was produced on Cowley, by finding, also in his mother's apartment, a copy of Spenser's "Fairly Queen." To a passing remark by his grandfather, we are indebted for the comedies of Molière; the recitation of some verses from Malherbe determined the studies of

* Lord J. Russell's "Life of Fox."

La Fontaine; Dr. Franklin attributes the principal events of his life to his stumbling upon a work of De Foe's, entitled an "Essay on Projects." Every school-boy knows the effect produced upon Newton's mind, and consequently upon science, by the fall of that apple on his head in a garden near Cambridge. Had Young been the successful, instead of the defeated, candidate for Cirencester, we should most probably have never had to thank him for his everlasting "Night Thoughts." John Locke's acquaintance with Lord Shaftesbury arose from the philosopher having been accidentally employed to execute a trifling commission for the statesman. Simon de Montfort, to strengthen his own hands against his foes, in 1263, summoned the burgesses of towns to assist the barons in deliberation on public affairs. In doing so, he enfranchised a class and constituted a house which have done more for the liberties of mankind than all other agents combined. To the harassing discipline and irrational restraint of a school in Stuttgart, we owe the "Robbers" of Schiller, the publication of which forms an era in the literature at least of Germany. Corneille fell in love, and like many other lovers tried to write verses; had it not been for that circumstance his poetical talents might have remained undiscovered. The great French minister Colbert owed all his success in life to the fact of having been seen, when a small friendless boy, stooping to pick up a pin, whilst his companions were intent only on frolic. So true is it, as Polybius remarked, long before any of the instances now cited

occurred, that "the most trifling incidents give birth to matters of the greatest moment and importance." How many bloody wars, for example, have originated in some paltry affront, some haughty word or threatening look, since the abduction of the fair Helen led to the siege of Troy. Few empires cannot trace great events in their history to a casual occurrence unnoticed at the time; few individuals, casting a retrospective glance on their lives, do not agree with the poetess, that—

"There are some moments in our fate
That stamp the colour of our days."

If the causes of great events be often trivial, they are not less frequently remote; ages occasionally elapsing before the effects appear.

We must regard the Providence of God as an infinite and complicated machine, the well-working of every wheel depending on some joint at an immense distance, and the correspondence of the whole being too intricate for mortal comprehension; or as a mighty web very tangled, apparently to us, but each thread of which is connected, in a manner known to eternal wisdom, with other threads so far removed that humanity cannot trace the connection. The relations which all the events of history bear to each other; the consequences which actions performed now may lead to a century hence; the correspondences between men and their doings in different ages, glimpses of which now and then may be obtained,—the more we study

them only teach us the more emphatically how little we do or can know of God's scheme of government, and how evident are the marks of a skill passing knowledge. There is perfect harmony and perfect system in God's arrangements, and ever and anon we unexpectedly obtain an insight into the intimate connection subsisting between two events occurring at a great interval of time. "And as there is not," says Bishop Butler, "any action or natural event, which we are acquainted with, so single and unconnected as not to have a respect to some other actions or events; so, possibly, each of them, when it has not an immediate, may yet have a remote, natural relation to other actions and events, much beyond the compass of the present world." "Nor can we give the whole account of any one thing whatever; of all its causes, ends, and necessary adjuncts;" "any one thing whatever may, for aught we know to the contrary, be a necessary condition to any other."*

So smoothly, so harmoniously, so obediently to natural laws does the great system of moral administration work, that its Divine Author is only visible to the eye of faith. His scheme requires no miraculous agency to insure its perfect adaptation to the desired end. He guides in secret His complicated handiwork, and very rarely lifts the veil which hides from vulgar curiosity the wonderful because far distant causes of effects now seen. We may entertain certain designs, and in endeavouring to carry them out we may take

* "Analogy of Religion," Part I. chap. vii.

certain steps; but these steps often lead to consequences of which we had not the slightest conception, and never could have foreseen. The more we reflect, the more clearly we shall be convinced that we are mere instruments in the hand of a superior Power.

“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

Michael Angelo, when he agreed to furnish Pope Julius II. with the design of a mausoleum, little imagined that he was initiating a great movement against the Church of Rome. Yet, so it was. That monument required a temple of corresponding magnificence to enclose it; for its construction a large sum of money had to be raised; indulgences were sold for that purpose; and the traffic in indulgences opened Luther’s eyes to the evils of the papacy. Thus, the building of St. Peter’s was the cause of the Reformation.

Even the greatest and most far-seeing men are to a large extent unwilling instruments in the hand of a higher intelligence to bring about results of which they never dreamed. We adopt a course without being aware of one-tenth of the consequences to which it will lead; we enter upon a path which conducts us in a direction very different from, if not entirely opposite to, our expectations. Man proposes, God disposes. The creature takes that part in the performance which has been assigned to him in the Creator’s plan. He may have had objects of his own

in view ; but they are lost sight of, or overshadowed, in order to accomplish nobler ends. These ends are neither always visible at the time nor always revealed afterwards ; the curtain rises only occasionally to strike the beholder with mingled admiration and awe.

Not only are we often the unconscious agents through which the inscrutable designs of Providence are effected, but frequently we seem constrained by an irresistible impulse to pursue a course very adverse to that which our inclinations would prompt us to choose. "A man's heart," says Solomon, "deviseth his way ; but the Lord directeth his steps." "There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Men are prone to misunderstand their own capabilities—to aim at positions which they are not qualified to occupy—altogether to mistake their proper sphere. There have been remarkable instances of their persevering in such error for years, until, by what appears the combination of fortuitous circumstances, they have absolutely been driven to take that place, to conform to that lot, which they were calculated to fill and adorn. The finger of an overruling Providence has never more conspicuously been displayed than in thwarting men in the dearest objects of their solicitude, and forcing them to put forth their energies in channels less accordant with their inclinations, but more suited to their powers. It is scarcely necessary even to refer to affliction as a powerful instrument employed in the moral government of the universe for buking prevalent follies and individual sins ; for

arresting men in a career, perseverance in which would be fatal to their best interests, and for enlisting in the service of truth and righteousness talents which had been formerly grievously misemployed. "I have seen," says the Preacher, "the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made everything beautiful in his time." There are wise and sufficient reasons for every such visitation,—for the plagues which now and then desolate whole regions of the earth, for the unusual mortality with which particular cities have been smitten, for the startling forms of death which fill with anguish the happy home, and he that has grace given to him to see the struggling sunbeams behind the cloud, to catch a glimpse of the merciful end in view, will feel that

"Heaven doth temper all its pangs
With such blest comfort as no mortal power
Can give or take away."

"Every cloud," writes Fanny Fern, "has a silver lining; and He who wove it knows when to turn it out. So, after every night, however long or dark, there shall yet come a golden morning." History affords many illustrations of this truth. During the reign of Bloody Mary in England, men's hearts, indeed, failed them, for fear and timid souls despaired both of Protestantism and of freedom; but scarcely had the breath left her body, when it was seen that her cruelties and persecutions had done much to render

impossible the dominion of the papacy in our country, and had materially advanced the cause of religious liberty. In the times of the French revolution, when heads rolled fast from under the guillotine, and Paris ran with blood, when every one lived in hourly terror of the scaffold, and a vile multitude had decreed the abolition of the altars of God, it must have been difficult indeed to cherish a trusting, hopeful spirit, to have believed that all things were working for good. But few men will now deny the benefits which Europe has derived from that wholesale overturning of ancient forms, those days of anarchy, tyranny, and massacre.

"The attachment of James to popery," says Mr. Hallam, "his infatuation, his obstinacy, his pusillanimity, nay, even the death of the Duke of Gloucester, the life of the Prince of Wales, the extraordinary permanence and fidelity of his party, were all the destined means through which our present grandeur and liberty, our dignity of thinking on matters of government, have been perfected. Those liberal tenets, which at the era of the revolution were maintained but by one denomination of English party, and rather perhaps an authority of not very good precedents in our history than of sound general reasoning, became in the course of the next generation almost equally the creed of the other, whose long exclusion from government taught them to solicit the peoples' favour; and by the time that Jacobitism was extinguished had passed into received maxims of English politics." Poets, as well as historians, have expatiated on this

theme. Who has not learned that most beautiful of all the Olney hymns, beginning—

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.”

In the same strain as Cowper sings Montgomery :—

“God is a Spirit, veil'd from human sight,
In secret darkness of eternal light :
Through all the glory of His works we trace
The hidings of His counsel and His face.
Nature, and time, and chance, and fate, fulfil
Unknown, unknowing, His mysterious will ;
Mercies and judgments mark Him every hour,
Supreme in grace, and infinite in power.”

In every age of the world there have been remarkable instances of God making the wrath of man to praise Him, of His overruling the wicked devices of the violent and the crafty to advance the cause of truth and righteousness. Since Daniel's triumph in the lions' den, tyrants and persecutors have been warned very often and in a variety of startling ways, that “there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.”

Neither Cyrus nor Alexander imagined, as they pursued their conquering careers, that they were only humble instruments for the fulfilment of prophecy. When the Romans opened up Europe to civilization, and connected by means of posts and roads the most distant corners of their great empire, they were like the Baptist, making straight paths for the Lord. It

was the Catholic opposition, banded against Austria for political ends, who, in the seventeenth century, proposed the march of Gustavus Adolphus into Germany, and thereby not only secured Protestantism in states where it had already obtained a precarious footing, but carried it with the Swedish army into parts of the empire where before it had been unknown. The purchase by Tunstal, Bishop of London, when at Antwerp, of all the copies of Tyndale's Bible on which he could lay hands, for the purpose of destroying them, was the means of relieving that reformer from his pecuniary embarrassment, and of promoting the cause which it was designed to injure. Frequently have the popes of Rome themselves, in pursuance of a temporal policy in their capacity of sovereigns, taken a part extremely injurious to the interests of that Church of which they were the heads; and nothing did more to ruin that religious communion in France than the efforts put forth by Louis XIV. to eradicate all dissent from it. Goethe, in his autobiography, tells us that it was "the factious dishonesty of Voltaire," in misrepresenting the argument against the Mosaic narrative from petrified shells, that first opened his eyes to the hollowness of the French infidel school. To Shaftesbury's private animosity against the court we, in some degree, owe the Habeas Corpus Act. To Henry VIII.'s licentiousness, the establishment of the Reformation in England;

"And gospel light first beam'd from Bullen's eyes."

A few years ago, in France, the Roman Catholics had influence enough to procure an enactment that no *colporteur* should be permitted to sell a Bible unless the authority of the Minister of the Interior had been previously affixed to the edition. The people, who had been so often warned by their priests against unauthorized translations, and had consequently been averse hitherto to purchase, eagerly bought copies which had an official seal, and the efforts of the clerical party to retard the circulation of God's word resulted in its promotion.

Zurich, in Switzerland, has long been a stronghold of civil and religious freedom. It is indebted for its wealth and manufacturing prosperity to Protestant citizens of Locarno, on the southern slopes of the Alps, who, persecuted to the death by a bigoted priesthood, and at length driven into exile for conscience' sake, brought along with them to their adopted city that industry and skill which soon rendered it powerful enough to afford a secure asylum for victims of ecclesiastical tyranny. But the most illustrious instance of all is that afforded in the history of the Puritan fathers and the settlement of the United States. Little did English churchmen think, when they drove from their shores the champions of religious liberty, that they were laying the first stone of a commonwealth founded on that principle and destined to overshadow many an existing monarchy. The New World wanted apostles of the doctrine; there were enough left behind in the Old to insure its eventual success. The Charleses and

the Lauds of the seventeenth century, by their blind intolerance, contributed marvellously to promulgate the principles which they desired to destroy. The same fault was committed by the despotic advisers of Elizabeth. She and her court set their hearts on bringing about a religious uniformity, which could exist only in name ; for the most powerful and popular sovereign cannot, by a mere exercise of authority, convince the reason and change the sentiments of men. The first Puritans were not theoretically opposed to the union of Church and State ; they were not even enemies of the existing ecclesiastical establishment ; they merely entertained conscientious objections to certain of its practices and ceremonies.

Instead of meeting them half-way, of showing any disposition to conciliate them, of removing acknowledged abuses and depriving them of good ground of complaint, the government and the bishops resorted to force and defied public opinion. They attempted to put down nonconformity by the strong arm of power, and Providence overruled their efforts to the furtherance of that great cause of religious liberty, which required a permanent and systematic opposition to a dominant national church. Persecution forced dissenters to scan more closely the scriptural warrant for such an institution, and led them to adopt those opinions which are now held by so many millions both in Great Britain and America.

In the history of the Reformation, we have many striking instances of the infallible wisdom shown by the Almighty disposer in so arranging affairs as to

advance his own beneficent ends, and to promote the emancipation of the human mind from papal tyranny. The devout and observant reader cannot fail to be struck throughout the whole account of that struggle with the manifestations of Supreme interposition on the side of infant Protestantism. Luther was ardent, intrepid, and uncompromising. His life might easily have been sacrificed in those times of excitement and violence had he not possessed a protector in the person of Frederick the Wise, and had not that prince been as wary and judicious as he was zealous and resolved. Then, Charles V. was under special obligations to the Elector of Saxony, a circumstance which restrained him from urging the latter to sacrifice the professor whom he esteemed. He had, moreover, a formidable rival in Francis I.; and the natural jealousy between sovereigns who nearly divided Europe between them, prevented them uniting their forces to nip the new religion in the bud. Love and pride at the same period involved Henry VIII., of England, in a quarrel with the Pope; while the usurpations and arrogance of the hierarchy in Sweden threw its just and able monarch, Gustavus Vasa, into the arms of the reforming party. The Catholic princes, too, were then not a little alarmed at the progress of the Moslem arms in the East. The most effective precautions, in fact, seemed to have been taken to prevent the Romish armies joining against the common enemy. Had all the nominally papal powers combined to crush incipient feeble Protestantism, influences more clearly

superhuman still would have been required to preserve it. Various events in the story of the crusades against the Albigenses, of the religious conflicts in Languedoc, and of the promulgation of the Pragmatic Sanction in France, teach us the same lesson. The Lord bringeth the counsel not only of the heathen, but of despotic and persecuting Christians to nought; "He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." The same Providence, which, in the fourth century, permitted Julian the Apostate, to undertake his rash expedition into Persia, which ended in the death of the imperial persecutor and the deliverance of the Church, took advantage of the corruption of that Church, in the dark ages, in order to preserve that remnant of learning which enabled the scholars of the next period to appreciate the literature of Greece and Rome.

The use of a Latin liturgy and the establishment of monasteries conduced to the preservation and the right understanding of those immortal works by ancient authors, the study of which gave a new impetus to scholarship, and caused the revival of letters. "Such," says Mr. Hallam, "is the complex reciprocation of good and evil in the dispensations of Providence, that we may assert, with only an apparent paradox, that had religion been more pure it would have been less permanent, and that Christianity has been preserved by means of its corruptions." *

The thoughtful mind will further be impressed with

* "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 355.

the marvellously seasonable and opportune periods at which important events have taken place. The wealth and power added to the Spanish crown by its possessions in America might have provided Charles with the means of subjugating the whole of Europe, had not the reformation in the Church stirred up at that very time a widespread feeling against political oppression. Had the art of printing been invented earlier, it might have been lost from want of materials on which to operate. Had the discovery been delayed, many valuable works might have been lost. In 1637 a vessel was about to sail from the Thames to the new settlements in America when it was stopped by royal warrant. On board of it were Hampden and Haselrig, Lords Saye and Brook, and Oliver Cromwell, intending colonists. Had they been allowed to cross the Atlantic how might the future of England have been altered!

Nor have there been wanting examples of an interference more direct, more startling, more significant still, of an interposition of Almighty agency, yet more calculated to silence and overawe. They may be found in all ages and in all countries widely separate. "In the hurricane which overtook the fleet after leaving Hispaniola," writes Mr. Prescott, in his "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," "all the vessels which contained the enemies of Columbus, including Bobadilla, with their treasures, foundered. 200,000 castellanos of gold, half of which belonged to the government, went to the bottom with them. The only one of the fleet which made its way back to

Spain was a crazy, weather-beaten bark, which contained the admiral's property, 4,000 ounces of gold."

Maximin, the author of several violent persecutions of the Christians throughout the Roman empire, was at last seized with a plague which made his flesh drop off his bones and his eyes leap out of their sockets. Remembering the agonies which he had inflicted on others, and recognizing the justice of his own punishment, he exclaimed in his last moments, when racked with pain, "It was not I, but others who did it." Huneric, the Vandal king, perpetrated the most atrocious cruelties for seven years on the persons of those who refused to profess Arianism. He himself was eaten up by worms, like that Herod who received the homage due only to God. Chosroes, king of Persia, who spared no one who would not renounce his belief in Jesus, was murdered by his own son. The final rebellion of the Jewish people against the Romans affords a striking commentary on the words—"*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*" They had not a chance of success; they resisted even when their own ill-founded hopes had departed; they quarrelled amongst themselves on the eve of being overwhelmed by the imperial legions; there was something supernatural about almost every incident of that terrible siege. Whose voice was it that Luther heard as he ascended the Santa Scala at Rome? What spirit, good or evil, whispered not for the first time in his awe-struck ear—"The just shall live by faith?" Many a humble, believing Protestant fell a victim to the Romish zeal and

bitter rage of the royal house of Valois. Let history tell how many members of that house died quietly in their beds. In their fate we see the avenging hand of God. Louis XIV. pursued the same course. During his reign the voices of martyred pastors were drowned by the roll of drums. A few years later one of his own descendants appeared on the scaffold, and was refused a hearing by the infuriated Parisian populace. It is related of Lord Clive, that when a young man in Madras, "one day in bad humour he withdrew to his own room, and there shut himself up. An hour or two afterwards one of his companions knocked at the door and was admitted. He found Clive seated in a remote corner of the apartment, with a table near him, on which lay a pistol. 'Take it and fire it over the window,' said Clive, pointing to the weapon. His friend did so; and no sooner was the report heard than Clive, springing from his seat, exclaimed, 'I feel that I am reserved for some end or other. I twice snapped that pistol at my own head, and it would not go off.'"

Without interrupting the natural order of things, without disturbing the relation between cause and effect, God does render His superintendence and control more conspicuous at one time than at another, in order that every attentive observer may be at no loss to recognize His interest in and government of the world. We see now and then great virtue recompensed in such a manner as to attract universal admiration; men reaping, even in this life, most unexpected and rich rewards for conduct distin-

guished by uprightness, self-denial, and zealous devotion to principle. That justice, too, which is "throned above," often "comes rushing on in storms." The monotony of existence is occasionally broken by lightning-strokes of retribution, which fill the nations with astonishment and fear, proclaim the character of the Almighty, and quell the pride of the wicked. "I shall not, I trust," says Gibbon, "be accused of superstition; but I must remark, that even in this world the natural order of events will sometimes afford the strongest appearances of moral retribution." As an instance of this he goes on to say that "the first Palæologus had saved his empire by involving the kingdoms of the West in rebellion and blood; and from these seeds of discord uprose a generation of idle men, who assaulted and endangered the empire of his son."*

Ovid recognizes this providential law in the lines—

*"Neque enim lex æquior ulla
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua;"*

and we have all read in Shakspeare of "the whirligig of time bringing in its revenges." Its operation has been oftentimes signally displayed in the career of political tyrants and relentless conquerors. For years they may be permitted to carry on their schemes with success, trampling on the liberties of the people, sacrificing the lives of thousands to their own ambitious designs. Apparently there is no power

* "Decline and Fall," vol. viii. p. 32.

strong enough to check them ; in triumph they overcome obstacles which the most sagacious thought would prove sufficient to stop them in their course of oppression and self-aggrandisement. But suddenly and unexpectedly they are brought low ; in a manner which the most far-seeing men could not have contemplated their yoke is broken ; their military glory fades. The unwholesome miasma of Italian marshes delivered Lombardy from the iron despotism of Frederic Barbarossa. The frost and snow of an early Russian winter drove Napoleon a fugitive back to France.

The world of nature is not only replete with proofs design—with marks of God's wisdom and goodness,—but with manifestations of his providential care. The sun, the wind, the clouds, and moon have all their uses. The planets in the heavens, and the insects which hum in the evening air, equally attest the presence of overruling beneficence. Examine the colours of the most modest flower, the arrangement of the feathers of the eagle's wing, the petals of every plant that imbibes the dew, the structure of the forest tree, or of the human frame ; in them all you see perfect adaptation ; skill passing knowledge.

“ O reader ! hast thou ever stood to see

The holly-tree ?

The eye that contemplates it well perceives

Its glossy leaves,

Order'd by an intelligence so wise,

As might confound the atheist's sophistries.”

Those flowers whose stems are shortest and leaves

less numerous, appear in blustering spring; those that smell the sweetest wait till the winds and rains are over before they bloom. The mighty forests overwhelmed in former ages were stored up by an allwise Provider to afford coal for us. The metals are invariably found near the beds of fuel, by means of which man renders them subservient to his use; just as the rattlesnake-weed—the antidote to the bite of that reptile—may always be found in districts which the snake inhabits. The ancient Egyptians, according to Diodorus Siculus, worshipped crocodiles, and their country would have been overrun with them had not the ichneumon lived upon their eggs. The gas which destroys life and extinguishes fire, nourishes and is necessary for the existence of the grass and flowers. A celebrated naturalist said that “if nature had not found numerous and powerful checks to the increase of butterflies, in three years they would fill the world.” “But for the labours of the white ants,” says Dr. Livingstone, “the tropical forests of South Africa, bad as they are now with fallen trees, would be a thousand times worse. They would be impassable on account of the heaps of dead vegetation lying on the surface, and emitting worse effluvia than the comparatively small unburied collections do now.” So true is it, as Shakspeare makes the friar soliloquize, that—

“Nought so vile that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give.”

But the doctrine of an overruling Providence is
notable of abuse, and has been abused by fanatics

in every age. The human mind is prone to regard the unusual rather than the usual, and to refuse submission to the general administration of the Divine government. We ought carefully to guard against that presumptuous readiness to interpret the judgments of God which characterizes too many religionists, and while deeply sensible of His gracious interposition on our own behalf and on behalf of others in circumstances of danger and trouble, brought on too frequently by our own imprudence or sin, we should continually keep in mind that He who rules the universe does so on fixed principles, and that He allows us to admire special evidences of His working, but neither to comprehend nor to become exponents of His plans.

MENTAL IMPROVEMENT.

ONE does not require to travel far, or to mix in a great variety of circles, before meeting men of no ordinary natural powers, who, by the misimprovement of time and the want of any definite object in life, have turned them to no good account, but allowed them to run to seed, without in the slightest degree benefiting society. To every individual a bountiful Creator has given talents of some kind, which ought not to be kept in a napkin, but employed to further beneficent ends. All have a mission to fulfil, though in the case of many it may be humble, and scarcely discernible to the world. When, however, the mental gifts are not great, we are less disposed to regret their not being exercised. The majority of triflers may go down to their graves without exciting in the minds of those with whom they come in contact any sense of loss by their services not having been rendered available. With very different feelings do we regard a man of sterling ability, who does not seem alive to the responsibility

which he incurs in not making a good use of that of which he is the steward,—who never attempts to realize his destiny,—who will not set his shoulder to the work given him to do. You cannot perhaps be many hours in his company without perceiving indications of intellectual or moral strength, fitting him to perform tasks of enduring advantage. Once and again he may even exert himself fitfully in a manner leaving no doubt of what could be done by his sustained exertion: but such specimens of his endowments only render his indolence the more melancholy and reprehensible. They lead one to reflect upon the vast heritage of profit which such men might leave behind them, were they as diligent, persevering, and conscientiously industrious as many who, without faculties of a shining order, have yet been conspicuous benefactors of the human race. St. Benedict wrote to the monks of the society which he founded,—“Beware of idleness—it is the greatest enemy of the soul.” The injunction applies to mental as well as bodily pursuits. He who permits his mind to remain in a state of torpor no more does his duty than he who gives way to physical indolence. In many respects we would rather see a body inactive and unwilling to labour than

“A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness.”

Sluggishness on the part of the former may be charitably attributed to constitutional weakness or disease. For the latter, especially if not fettered by

a feeble outward frame, we cannot so readily find an excuse. Ensign Clutterbuck expressed his high admiration and envy of that "happy vacuity of all employment" which distinguished Captain Dolittle; but even the thoughtless would be loth to praise systematic mental sloth in the case of men capable of exalting themselves, and doing good to others. And yet how many such continually cross our path, whose whole conduct reminds us of the declaration put by Home into the mouth of Douglas,—

"So to lose my hours
Is all the use I wish to make of time."

If persons answering to this description only knew the delight to be experienced in improving leisure moments, or, as Young calls them, "the gold-dust of time,"—if they could only be induced for twelve months together to try the plan of treasuring up stray hours and half-hours, and devoting them to some useful and definite end, how much happier would be their lives, how incalculable would be the advantage conferred upon the world. One who has accustomed himself to turn to good account every interval not required by his ordinary business, or claimed by social fellowship, never feels so dissatisfied and uneasy as when he has suffered a day to pass without profitably employing these precious periods, which once lost never can be regained. Benjamin Franklin derived no aid in his self-education from tutors or well-taught seminaries: he stole his hours of study from meals and sleep, and for years, with

inflexible resolution, endeavoured to save for his own instruction every minute which he could gain. The biographer of George Stephenson tells us that "the smallest fragments of his time were regarded by him as precious, and he was never so happy as when improving them." Malcolm, in his valuable work on Persia, describes a native of that country, who, observing the English habit of not reclining during the day, remarked how much at the year's end we must be in advance of those who waste time in *kef* and sleep, and began to conceive how men of such mould had conquered India.

Whoever has a purpose in life, and feels it to be both a duty and a pleasure to make a good use of the talents and opportunities which God has given him, will not permit time to slip away without a plan. Every hour snatched from his ordinary avocations will be devoted to maturing and carrying out schemes of study and intellectual exercise; he will allot to himself certain tasks to be accomplished within a given period, and so arrange his day as to keep a portion of it, however short, sacred to mental improvement. In this, as in other employments, one can scarcely over-estimate the importance of method. The want of it has been a stumblingblock in the path of many, preventing the full development of their talents, and rendering them less illustrious as men, less valuable as public servants.

Instances might be adduced, in the history of every country, of statesmen who might have reached the very foremost ranks, but failed to do so, on account

of the absence of that system and order which distinguished the conduct of men of inferior abilities. No doubt, to be methodical and economical in employing the mind, and especially in turning leisure moments to a right account, one requires a degree of determination, force, and resolution which some seem not to possess at all, and others to find strange difficulty in putting forth. Dr. Arnold said, from his experience of keeping a school, that the difference between one boy and another was more in energy than ability. This is not only true, but it ought to be a stimulus and encouragement to those who never imagined themselves intellectually fit for anything. Franklin, already referred to, was a remarkable example of what can be done by that firm resolve called by one of our Scottish bards

“The stalk of carle-hemp in man.”

Napoleon, too, on numerous occasions, displayed a strength of applicatory power sufficient in itself to account for much of his wonderful success. In 1814, after his fall, when told that it was proposed he should reside in Elba, or somewhere else,—“Elba,” said he, “who knows anything of Elba? Seek out some officer who is acquainted with Elba. Look out what books or charts can inform us about Elba.” “In a moment,” adds Sir Walter Scott, “he was as deeply interested in the position and capabilities of this little islet, as if he had never been emperor of France,—nay, almost of the world.”

The man who has a purpose, and values time, must likewise be persevering; not easily deterred by obstacles, full of hope, and stimulated rather than discouraged by difficulties. Savonarola, when he first attempted to preach, broke down in the most signal manner. His friends were sadly disappointed; he himself, mortified beyond expression. But he did not give way to despair; on the contrary, by dint of constant practice among peasants and children, in remote country districts, in the solitude of his own chamber, he soon acquired a facility of utterance and a command of striking language, which rendered him the prophet of his age and the first orator in Italy. Robespierre had a harsh voice, an ugly face, and a hesitating tongue. His earliest efforts at public speaking failed so egregiously, that ninety-nine men out of a hundred, in his situation, would never have tried again; yet, in a very short time, by means of constant and indefatigable exertion to overcome his constitutional defects, he rose to lead the National Assembly of France. Sheridan and Disraeli deserve similar credit for their successful determination to gain the ear of the House of Commons. George Stephenson's maxim throughout life, and his first word of advice to all young men, was "Persevere." For want of this virtue, disappointed it may be in their first sanguine hopes, or unduly alarmed by unexpected hindrances, not a few who might have signalized themselves have been content—

"To wither in the blossom of renown,
And unrecorded to the dust go down."

But steadiness and constancy of purpose soon become habitual, and therefore natural and easy. The man who for a year resolutely refuses to "trifle life away," at the end of that period would very probably feel trifling to be exceedingly irksome. He who can be induced to give up spending his evening hours in mere lounging, or, as the Americans say "loafing," and to devote at least a certain proportion of them to intellectual pursuits, will, ere long, experience so much enjoyment in reading and study, that no punishment could be more severe for him than to deprive him of his books and papers, and compel him to fall back on the objectless idle life which he led before. Not only does he acquire the habit of mental industry, but he continually experiences new pleasures as he enlarges the sphere of his knowledge, and becomes more deeply impressed with the value of time. So brief is the period bestowed upon mortals for mental exertion, that every hour should be saved with zealous care. It is not enough that we abstain from devoting our powers to evil ends: we must not allow them to lie waste or unimproved, and the fleetness with which the minutes fly should stir us up to make the most of them. How forcible are the words put by Shakspeare into the mouth of Hotspur:—

"O gentlemen ! the time of life is short ;
To spend that shortness basely, were too long."

Longfellow, in "Hyperion," compares life to the Rhine bursting away in youth from the Alps, making

for itself a channel in manhood through mountains, and passing wearily through sands in old age to the sea. The simile is just, as well as striking, and we may learn from it how small a proportion the years available for intellectual effort bear to existence. On this subject there occurs a beautiful passage in one of Keats's *Miscellaneous Poems*, entitled "Sleep and Poetry":—

"Then the events of this wide world I'd seize
Like a strong giant, and my spirit tease,
Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider! life is but a day;
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
Life is the rose's hope, while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.
Oh for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy! so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed."

The poet here recognizes his vocation; feels how brief a period is allotted to him for performing his work, and girds himself to accomplish it. Like sentiments should animate all who have been blessed with a liberal education, moderate abilities, and an average amount of leisure. Not one of us is without a mission, if we only knew it, and could be brought to

recognize our responsibility. The uncertainty of life and earthly things should unceasingly teach us "to redeem the time." "Ceux qui commandent à la terre," says Massillon, "peuvent-ils répondre d'eux-mêmes pour l'instant qui suit? N'est-ce pas ici où Dieu veut nous faire sentir qu'il est le maître." Time is as valuable as money; he who squanders it may well be called a prodigal, for he wastes one of God's most precious gifts, and throws away what cannot be recovered :—

"Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus."

How sound and much needed is the advice given anonymously, but with a felicity of expression which leads one to suspect the author :—

"Nay, dally not with time, the wise man's treasure :
Though fools are lavish on't, the fatal fisher
Hooks souls while we waste moments."

Of time, every one has heard that procrastination is the thief. The words have become household and proverbial. Yet do they fall unheeded on our ear. Day after day resolving, determining, planning, how many of us advance no further! Dupes of a to-morrow, which never arrives, we pass a profitless existence, and die unlamented, perhaps, almost unknown. The man who has a purpose will never defer till a future period what can be done to-day; such delays are inconsistent with a due economy of leisure hours. They betray a weakness which unfits for unremitting and beneficial effort, and against which, as we value

our intellectual manhood, we are bound indomitably to strive.

Volumes might be written on the text "Delays are dangerous." Suffice it here to narrate an anecdote of Sheridan, as given in his Memoirs, by Thomas Moore. "When some severe charges against him—relating to an affair he had with Matthews—appeared in the *Bath Chronicle*, he called upon Woodfall, printer of the *London Chronicle*, and requested him to insert them, in order that they might gain universal circulation; and that his answer, *which he meant soon to prepare*, might be understood as universally. Woodfall complied with his request, but the refutation never was written; so that the venom was by this means spread, and his indolence prevented him from ever applying the antidote."

It may be objected to the foregoing remarks on the profitable employment of leisure hours, that the majority of persons to whom they apply require more relaxation from their daily pursuits than reading and study afford, and that those who are confined more or less closely to the shop or counting-house for several hours out of the twenty-four, can scarcely be expected to do anything but amuse themselves in the evening. To a certain extent there is truth in this reasoning. There must at times be an unbending, else the mind, kept in a constant state of tension, suffers injury. Both our mental and bodily powers stand in need of rest and recreation. Intense and unremitting application has hurried many a noble spirit to a premature grave.

Seneca says that "a continuity of labour deadens the soul;" the greatest men on the roll of thinkers and writers have had their enjoyments, romping with children, cultivating gardens, playing at games, angling, and rowing: the Jesuits, who thoroughly understood human nature, had a rule that every two hours of study should be followed by a period of remission from mental exertion. Many of those who have been most conspicuous for their intellectual industry, who have most distinguished themselves and benefited their fellows, have also been careful not to overwork their faculties, and have systematically, as well from liking as from necessity, because they felt pleasure in it, no less than because they felt it beneficial as a sanitary measure, amused themselves with the chase, the rod, or the gun, to say nothing of many less exciting and engrossing indoor amusements. But have not thousands among us plenty of leisure time to spare both for pleasure and for study; enough of hours in the course of the year to devote both to innocent relaxation and the improvement of the mind, abundance of evenings to indulge in sport, whilst we set aside a fair proportion for literary labour? Attention to the one enhances the enjoyment of the other: a man feels a double zest for a day in the woods after spending several days in intellectual exercise:—

"If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work."

The consciousness of having kept relaxation in its proper place, of not having suffered it to gain domi-

nion over our spirits, of having fairly earned a right moderately to indulge in it by the vigorous and purpose-like exercise of the faculties of our minds, enables the man who studies hard at stated times to enjoy the sports of the field and the society of friends with a far keener relish than is known to the—

“Lorenzos of our age, who deem
One moment unamused a misery.”

If, however, it be no very difficult matter to acquire the habit of conscientiously setting apart a portion of our time to books; it is far easier to fall into the habit of literally wasting our evening hours. “There is,” says Mr. Wilberforce, in his “Practical Christianity,” “often a kind of sober settled plan of domestic dissipation, in which, with all imaginable decency, year after year wears away in unprofitable vacancy. Even old age often finds us pacing in the same round of amusements which our early youth had tracked out.” How many, not to say persons but families, make pleasure-hunting a business, following, season after season, the same wearisome round of so-called enjoyments, in London and at their country seats, at Baden and at fashionable watering-places, on the race-course and in the ball-room. “Then their amusements,” writes one well acquainted with that sort of life; “the heat—the dust—the sameness—the slowness of that odious park in the morning; and the same exquisite scene repeated in the evening on the condensed stage of a rout-room, where one has more heat, with less air, and a narrower dungeon, with

diminished possibility of escape; we wander about like the damned in the story of Vathek, and we pass our lives, like the royal philosopher of Prussia, in conjugating the verb *je m'ennuie*." What is true of amusement-hunters in the high life of the metropolis, is more or less true as well of all persons favoured with a certain amount of leisure time, who devote the whole of it to mere pleasuring. They will find the salient points in their character admirably described in the account given of Sir Roger de Coverley's friend, Mr. William Wimble, who, "being bred to no business and born to no estate, generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game."

In order to persevere in making a good use intellectually, of those hours on which business, relaxation, and social fellowship have no claims, in addition to the qualities already adverted to, we should be fortified by self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self-control, else our studious efforts may be misdirected, too easily discouraged, or laid aside for more alluring but less profitable occupations. "Endeavour to know thyself," said Don Quixote, to his faithful esquire, "a knowledge of all others, the most difficult to acquire." In no pursuit is it more useful, or rather necessary, than in mental culture. Every one should endeavour to make himself acquainted with his own capabilities, to measure his intellectual strength, and test his fitness for the task which he assigns to himself; otherwise he may find years of labour in some degree thrown away, and opportunities missed which may never occur again. "It is an uncontested truth," says Swift, "that no man ever

made an ill-figure who understood his own talents ; nor a good one, who mistook them." He may not have overrated his powers, but simply turned them into a wrong channel, vainly endeavouring to render them available in one direction, whilst nature intended them for, and would have made them influential for good in another. There is a curious passage in the first part of "Pascal's Thoughts," which may be worth transcribing, not because the position which he takes is defensible, but because his remarks may throw light on the idea under consideration now : "La peine insupportable," he says, " d'être obligé de vivre avec soi et de penser à soi, est l'origine de toutes les occupations tumultueuses des hommes, et de tout ce qu'on appelle divertissement ou passe-temps, dans lesquels on n'a, en effet, pour but, que d'y laisser passer le temps sans le sentir, ou plutôt sans se sentir soi-même ; et d'éviter, en perdant cette partie de la vie, l'amertume, et le dégoût intérieur qui accompagnerait nécessairement l'attention que l'on ferait sur soi-même durant ce temps-là." It may fairly be questioned whether it is not so much self-study as self-ignorance which causes this inward dissatisfaction and inquietude, and whether the man who has mastered the knowledge of himself, and is therefore able to give his faculties a proper direction, is not the least likely to feel time hang heavy on his hands. It will scarcely be disputed that he who has obtained this acquaintance with his own faculties may be expected to make a better use of his vacant hours, and render his studies more advantageous to himself and others, than he who, without self-examination or

reflection, works on in the dark. Nor should we allow depreciatory remarks to damp our ardour; they are as often made thoughtlessly and causelessly as with good reason, and so frequently are merely the offspring of envy, disappointment, or some such malignant passion; that he who permits himself to be turned aside from his object by them, is unworthy of the name of man. "*Le sentiment de nos forces les augmente,*" is a maxim which should be ever present to the minds of those who are naturally deficient in that self-reliance and well-grounded confidence so necessary to life's success. We must likewise have our likings and desires habitually under control, resisting steadily the encroachments of idleness and the temptations of pleasure. Fixity of purpose in intellectual improvement is essential to a fortunate issue. It, of course, implies that diligence, without which there can be no excellence either in literature or any other pursuit, and which is, after all, in the majority of instances the secret of success. Thousands of men who have been of signal service to mankind, have obtained their fame not by the possession of extraordinary talents, but by the painstaking improvement of faculties in no wise specially remarkable. "Genius," says Buffon, "is patience." Yet we are apt to worship the former, and ignore the latter, forgetful that steady and laborious effort has done far more for the world than transcendent ability, that no enduring work has ever been produced without it, and that every department of human knowledge, is under much higher obligations to unwearied steadfast exertion, than to the fitful movements of marvellous powers. The im-

mortal Newton himself maintained that he knew of nothing except a habit of patient thinking which distinguished him from other men. Luther's application was intense. So untiringly and habitually did he gird up his loins to work, that, after his first publication, he never allowed a year to elapse without sending at least one book to the press. This truth may be strikingly exemplified in the case of several of our most illustrious poets. Milton was most systematic and conscientiously diligent in improving his time. While yet a youth he had an incredible store of literary information; and no one can read his works without at least suspecting that intimate acquaintance with languages—dead as well as living—Hebrew, Greek and Latin, no less than Italian, French, and Spanish, which of itself was sufficient to make him a celebrity among the scholars of his age. Dr. Johnson remarked on the Miltonian MSS., preserved at Cambridge: "Such relics show how excellence is acquired: what we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence." Kirke White was even more perseveringly industrious. Besides mastering some half a dozen foreign tongues, he studied astronomy, chemistry, music, mechanics and law, and read so incessantly, that he allowed himself no sufficient time for food and sleep. Smollett is another instance of remarkable diligence. It would be hard to name a branch of literature in which his pen was not employed. As a novelist and a poet, he is still read and admired; but his contemporaries knew him as a physician, a politician, and an historian as well. Virgil spent the day in revising

and correcting the verses which he had written in the morning. Cicero, during all the troubles of his public career, whether in Rome or in exile, prosperous or persecuted, never relaxed his literary exertions; Ariosto's manuscripts, still extant at Ferrara, show that some parts of "Orlando Furioso" were written eight times over. The history of most great men and great undertakings illustrates the soundness of the advice given in the good old couplet—

"Despair of nothing that you would attain,
Unwearied diligence your point will gain."

As a rule it is impossible to succeed without it. For one who has earned for himself a name and a nation's gratitude by mere displays of genius, hundreds have obtained these honours by continuance of endeavour, and an assiduity which could not be turned aside from its object. "Having thus entered the army," says the biographer of Sir Henry Havelock, "he gave his whole soul up to his profession. He read every military memoir and history within his reach. He laid in a rich store of information for his future guidance. He became familiar with every memorable battle and siege of ancient and modern times, and examined the detail and the result of every movement in the field with the eye of a soldier. Frequently has he delighted his friends in India by fighting over again the actions of Blenheim and Austerlitz, and the other memorable battles of Marlborough and Napoleon, calling up from memory the strength and disposition of each division of the contending forces, and tracing on paper their suc-

cessive movements, till he came to the critical movement, which, in his opinion, decided the fate of the day." He had been all his life long diligent in his profession, and at last he found an opportunity of using that knowledge, which unremitting application had given him, in a manner which renders his own name imperishable, and has been of unspeakable service to his country. Perhaps, like other heroes, while yet unknown, he had lived in hope of being able to do something memorable, signally useful and meritorious. The daydreams of youthful ambition are not always to be despised, for they sometimes stimulate to exertion and

"Dreams grow realities to earnest men."

It should be our endeavour to direct and control and regulate; but not to discourage entirely the aspirations which prompt to mental exertion and intellectual exercise, as "L.E.L." beautifully expresses it:—

"Those high imaginings, which make
The glory which they hope;
Fine-wrought aspirings, lofty aims,
Which have in youth such scope;
Like tides which, haunted by the moon,
Rise but, alas! to fall too soon.

Vain are these dreams, and vain these hopes;
And yet 'tis these give birth
To each high purpose, generous deed,
That sanctifies our earth.
He who hath highest aim in view,
Must dream at first what he will do."

There are those who are too apt to decry ambition,

without discriminating between that species of it which is selfish and productive of evil consequences, and that which is generous and beneficial to society; between

"Th' ambitious deed,
And all the dangerous paths which lead
To honours falsely won."

and

"The spur that the clear spirit doth raise,
To scorn delights, and live laborious days."

Of the former kind is that which Shakspeare makes Wolsey enjoin Cromwell to "fling away" as a sin that caused the angels to fall; that which our great Scottish novelist has described as "the bastard brother of avarice;" that shameful and guilty kind denounced by Cowper as based on love of self; that which incites the conqueror to carry misery and desolation amongst his fellow-men, to impoverish nations and shed rivers of blood; that which glories in being the leader in profligacy and dissipation; that which looks for its reward, not in the consciousness of having done good and the gratitude of worthy men, but in the mere tribute of popular praise. Then there is a

"Vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself,"—

which, not content with moderate achievements, builds a tower to reach to heaven.

Over the entrance of his ancestral hall, Sir Nicholas Bacon placed the motto "*Mediocria firma.*" Mirabeau was wont to say, "Remember the Capitol is near the Tarpeian Rock."

The man who has a purpose and object in life, will of necessity take good care to avoid criminal desires like these, all glory which has no good foundation, everything akin to undeserved applause. He will wish not only to be known, but to be admired, and admired by those whose good opinion is not lightly or without sufficient grounds obtained; he will loathe every appearance of false distinction, and rather incur censure than gain credit for virtuous actions which he has not done. Nothing too hard can be said of that ambition which seeks to do good to no one, and grasps the shadow of a fleeting, because an unmerited fame, or of that which Coleridge, writing of Wallenstein, denominates "a consuming flame," as contradistinguished from "a genial fire." There is a passage in Seneca's work "De Beneficiis," in which the very same contrast is made, and no doubt the desire

"To build an everlasting name,
O'erleap the narrow vulgar span,
And live beyond the life of man,"

like all our passions, ought to be kept within due bounds, and prevented from gaining too great a mastery over the spirit. But love of distinction is by no means to be denounced in itself; on the contrary, it has been implanted within us by a beneficent Creator for wise and holy ends, that we may be spurred on by it to actions calculated to promote His glory and the good of our fellow-men. Montgomery tells us that his ardent wish from boyhood was to do something that would make him for ever known. A manufacturer desiring to make Chatterton, when a child of

eight years old, a present of a cup, asked him what device should be inscribed on it, "Paint me an angel," answered the boy, "with wings and a trumpet, to trumpet my name over the world." The feeling is not only natural, but commendable, if directed in a right channel, and the most effectual mode of obtaining an envied fame is to make a good use of the talents and opportunities with which God has endowed us. "If," writes Hawthorne in his "Mosses from an Old Manse," "your heart is set on being known, the surest, the only method, is to live truly and wisely for your own age, whereby, if the native force be in you, you may likewise live for posterity."

There are men who affect to despise fame, and claim credit for doing so, not only mere selfish or inordinate ambition, but all wish for distinction of whatever kind. They might be addressed in the words of Tacitus, "*Contempta fama, contemnuntur virtutes.*" True, there may be, there is far more real happiness in living privately than in attempting any public work; the man ambitious of being something, and doing something, meets with troubles and vexations unknown to him who dwells in the bosom of his family and seeks no species of celebrity. But is it our duty thus to live for ourselves?—Are we not responsible for the active exercise of our powers?—Is not he who feels a consciousness of abilities fitted to be influential for the benefit of mankind bound habitually to employ them. Would it not be blamable in him, were he, on account of the anxiety and mortification inseparable from an active career, to shut himself up at home and refuse that position of honour,

but of difficulty, for which his talents qualify him. One of the definitions of ambition given by Johnson, is "the desire of anything great or excellent;" and no one will say that such an ambition is not virtuous. Besides we have not only ourselves to please, but to win the approving smile of our fellows, whose verdict in the vast majority of cases may be reckoned upon on the side of truth and justice. Then, we can scarcely leave out of view the benefits which this passion on the part of individuals confers on mankind. "All the works of human industry," says Dr. Brown, "are, in a great measure, referable to an ambition of some sort, that, however humble it may seem to men of prouder views, is yet relatively as strong as the ambition of the proudest. We toil, that we may have some little influence, or some little distinction, however small the number of our inferiors may be, and the toils which raise to the petty distinction, are toils of public though humble utility."

The duty of improving time and striving to be of some service to our fellow-men is most tersely and beautifully enforced in Longfellow's "Psalm of Life," and the fact of almost every word of that ode having already become household, shows how true and natural are the sentiments which it conveys. The lines indeed now are so frequently quoted as to be in danger of being hackneyed and rendered distasteful. But those who fairly enter into their spirit, resolve not to waste a single leisure hour, determine to look upon mental improvement as a solemn duty, measuring their own strength, brace themselves to perform some work, keep steadily in view an object in life,

recognize it as incumbent upon them to contribute something to the well-being and happiness of the human race, and above all, regard the approval of a good conscience, and the favour of God, as the highest object of ambition, may find at length their efforts crowned with conspicuous and unexpected success, and

“Leave a nobler monument than Egypt
Hath piled in her brick mountains o’er dead kings.”

PRIESTCRAFT.

IT requires no very intimate acquaintance with history, or profound observation of mankind, to convince every one how difficult it is to preserve religion from degenerating into mere external forms, more especially to dissociate it from priestcraft. In all ages, and under all creeds, men are apt to attach a sort of superstitious importance to the ministers of Heaven, which offers a temptation scarcely to be resisted to usurp ghostly powers. If among freemen and Protestants there lingers a disposition to place too much spiritual authority in the hands of a class, what can we expect of those who, from their infancy, have not been trained to think or permitted to act for themselves in political matters, and whose faith is pledged to a church claiming for itself infallibility, and demanding an unreasoning obedience on the part of its adherents? It seems almost as natural for certain minds—and they constitute by no means a contemptible number—to yield to sacerdotal pretensions as to worship, to place as much confidence in

the so-called ambassadors of God as in God himself, to obey their commands as readily as they do the injunctions of the written word. The revival of letters and the Reformation went far towards emancipating Europe from such shackles; but there still exists a willingness to impose and wear them, upon which every lover of civil and religious liberty must keep a jealous eye. There lie the seeds of incipient despotism and slavery. The liberal statesmen tries to crush them; the admirer of the good old times strives, on the other hand, to foster and revivify them. The latter may not be an ardent theorist, but simply a hater of innovation. Respect for a dominant ecclesiastical order was one of the virtues which he heard extolled on his mother's knee; he has ever looked upon them as essential to good government; and, faithful to his ancestral sentiments, he has remained one of those who, as Lord Brougham says, "celebrate their revels by libations to church and king, most of them regarding the clergy as of far more importance than the Gospel." In some cases sacerdotal consequence derives encouragement from a fearful, gloomy, ascetic turn of mind; in others from attachment to antiquated customs and habits of thought. The Roman and the Anglo-Catholic reverence their pastor as holding in his hands the keys of an eternal world; the country squire believes in him as a companion to himself and a sort of upper policeman to keep the parish in order. The majority of Christians, even at the present day, recognize a far greater distinction between the people and their religious instructors than the New Testament warrants.

As soon as the latter succeeded in their attempt to be regarded by the populace as inheritors of the rights and privileges of the Levitical priesthood, they placed themselves on the high road to profit and honour, not, however, without doing violence to the first principles of the new faith. We hear nothing of altars, and tithes, and other such-like phrases borrowed from the Mosaical dispensation, until the era of this Jewish succession. The early Christian ministers were simply "faithful men—able to teach others—not entangled with the affairs of this life." In no sense were they elevated above their fellows; they held no monopoly of the teacher's office; they were set apart for the better performance of the duties of the ministry, not to be lords over God's heritage. The primitive Church was a republic in which good and capable men naturally governed, not a despotism farmed out by a class. But it did not long preserve its first simplicity. Scarcely had the clergy of the second century, perhaps out of deference to the prejudices of the Jews, assumed their succession from the sons of Aaron, than ministers often ignorant and careless in various parts of Christendom began to proclaim themselves, in some supernatural, mysterious sense, the direct heirs of the Apostles. When John was gathered to his fathers in lonely Patmos, he left no luminary behind him whose pre-eminence would for a moment be recognized by the churches; no teachers of distinguished name followed immediately in the footsteps of Peter and James; it seems as if God had purposely arranged a blank between them and the Polycarps, Justins, and Augustines of a later age, in order that there might be no pretext

for such a doctrine as that of Apostolic succession. The inspired disciples of the Lord shoot out from their contemporaries like comets in the heavens; the men who stepped into their offices twinkle like nebulous stars. Yet, notwithstanding the absurdities, the improbabilities, the impossibilities in the way, not only Romanists, but professed Protestants, aver their belief in this monstrous dogma, a dogma which, more perhaps than any other, strengthens the power of priestcraft. No matter that the sacerdotal tree is far from perfect—that the occurrence of certain events must be taken for granted—that gaps exist which, it is supposed, can be filled up, but never have been—men have always been, and still are found to believe in a notion, “the assurance whereof,” Chillingworth says, “is like a machine composed of an innumerable multitude of pieces, of which it is strangely unlikely but some will be out of order; and yet, if any one be so, the whole fabric falls of necessity to the ground.” The Apostles of our Saviour worked miracles, spoke a multitude of tongues, issued orders to the churches, exercised on earth a power delegated to them by heaven. By claiming to be their successors in office, the clergy of later days claim also equal authority, and all who fail to resist such pretensions aid and abet in what Dr. Johnson defines as “religious fraud—management of priests to gain power.” It would be bad enough for able and zealous teachers of righteousness to demand to be regarded in any such light. How much more revolting and ludicrous does the idea appear in the case of the thousand immoral prelates and *cures* who have asserted their right

to be considered as lineal descendants of the Galilean fishermen, or even in the case of that still more numerous class

“Whose tones proclaim
How flat and wearisome they feel their trade.”

Another doctrine which has powerfully conduced to the maintenance of priestcraft is that of auricular confession. The key to the vast influence of the Roman Catholic clergy lies there. As long as this practice continues, the usurped privileges and immunities of the ecclesiastical order are safe—the craft is in little danger: withdraw it, and mankind, like beings disenchanted, begin to find out the imposture, and rebel against the tyranny. “The artful institution,” remarks Prescott, “of the tribunal of confession, established with a view of instructing the disciples of the Romish Church to rely implicitly in matters of conscience on their spiritual advisers, brought, as it were, the whole Christian world at the feet of the clergy, who, far from being always animated by the meek spirit of the Gospel, almost justified the reproach of Voltaire, that ‘confessors have been the source of most of the violent measures pursued by princes of the Catholic faith.’” In the Greek Church, the same practice prevails; but the priest is charged not to question the penitent, who is not bound to make a clean breast of all his or her iniquities; among the heathen it has likewise been found to exist in various forms and modifications. Can it be true that clergymen professing Protestantism make no secret of having adopted it before the eyes of their ecclesiastical

superiors—in priestcraft-hating Britain? No one acquainted with the present system of government in Roman Catholic countries abroad, more especially the States of the Church, does not know that the confessional is constantly made to minister to a system of political espionage—that priests, bishops, and rulers are allied by means of it to rivet the chains of the people. The documents found in 1848 in the premises of the Inquisition at Rome proved incontestibly that “the most culpable abuse was made of sacramental confession, especially that of women, rendering it subservient both to political purposes and to the most abominable licentiousness.” Every one knows to what an extent this instrument of power has been wielded by the clergy, in order to extend their domains and replenish their coffers. Thousands of the fairest properties in Europe have been secured to the Church by means of ghostly absolutions, especially *in articulo mortis*. Luther, in a little book written during his residence in the castle of Wartburg, says: “It is too true that many of the monks urge the people to confess, not from a regard to piety, but for the purpose of enriching themselves. They live in the houses of the opulent, and acquire an ascendant over them by becoming acquainted with their secrets; they contrive to be with them when they are dying, and insinuate themselves into their last wills.”

Not content with political espionage and pecuniary spoliation, both seculars and regulars have again and again been convicted of making use of the confessional to destroy the peace of families, to encourage domestic deceit, and even to bring about murder. In Italy,

wives are frequently prevailed on by their spiritual advisers to denounce their husbands to the Inquisition. In Spain, more particularly in the secluded provinces, where uninstructed zeal abounds, during the last civil war women were found ready, at the instigation of their confessors, to plot against and betray to ignominy and death their lovers suspected of being unfriendly to the sacerdotal party. The fair sex have ever been the more numerous dupes of this foul engine of tyranny. Working upon the deep devotional feeling so often omnipotent in the minds of the women of the sunny south, ecclesiastics have times without number induced them to cast themselves loose from the ties of social affection and even of plighted love, and, sacrificing every joy in life, to become mere emissaries and tools of priestcraft. Damasus, bishop of Rome, during the reign of Valentinian, was nicknamed *Auriscalpius Matronarum*, the ladies' earscratcher. How many priests and prelates since his day merit a similar cognomen? It is related of the wife of the Emperor Maximus that she used to lay herself prostrate at the feet of Martin, bishop of Tours, to wait upon him at table as his servant, to arrange his couch for him, and reverently to collect the crumbs which fell from his table. No doubt this occurred fourteen hundred years ago; but who that has travelled extensively and observingly in Europe has not seen with his own eyes similar acts of debasing superstition at the present day—dirty monks placing their feet on the necks of noble dames, debauched priests listening with a leer to the secret sins of beautiful girls; pure, high-minded women kissing the

hands of cardinals both luxurious and profligate? Nor are Protestants, especially ladies, guiltless of a similar charge. Do they not idolize favourite clergymen, follow their every motion with admiring eyes, encourage them in all their follies, sit on "the dear man's" pulpit-stairs? All this has a tendency to degrade and corrupt. It is utterly alien to the spirit of Christianity, and may be called the evangelical phase of priestcraft.

There exists an intimate connection between our subject and another leading characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church, viz. the celibacy of the clergy. Lord Bacon remarked, that "wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity." They bring out and exercise our sympathies, purify the affections, soften the heart, and stimulate kindly emotions, unknown to the celibate, who stands isolated and unsupported in the world, breathing a different atmosphere, having little in common with the mass around him. Many a man who has taken this vow in early youth, before his frame was developed or his views matured, has been converted by it into a gloomy fanatic; unhappy himself, having no regard to the happiness of others, deprived of the domestic relations by which God in His wisdom fosters sentiments of love and tenderness, striving to make up for them by becoming a devotee and a bigot. Having no tie to bind him to his fellow-men, he lives for his profession, and no milk of human kindness prevents him taking any steps, however fierce and cruel, which may exalt his caste. He is an Ishmaelite, easily transformed into an inquisitor. He has signed

and sealed his own sentence of exclusion from domestic joys, and you might as well expect to find bananas ripening under a Greenland winter's sun as to see these morbid, frigid souls expanding into geniality. Had Pius II., when elected pope, been able to carry out his previously-expressed views, reversing the decision of the Council of Placentia, and decreeing liberty of marriage to the clergy, he would have conferred an inestimable boon on Christendom, but taken away a formidable weapon of priestcraft.

But the most potent and influential instrument which Rome has employed for exalting the dignity of the ecclesiastical order, is the doctrine of transubstantiation. It was Innocent III. who finally and solemnly confirmed this monstrous invention of sacerdotal ingenuity, and, as Gibbon says, accomplished the "most signal triumph over sense." He was shrewd enough to see what importance its general reception would bestow on the clergy; and so readily did the scheme succeed, that ere long the notion became credited throughout all Christendom. So universally and powerfully, indeed, did it take hold of the public mind, that long after Luther and Calvin ceased to be Roman Catholics the former believed in a corporeal, the latter in a real, presence of our Saviour in the consecrated elements. Having yielded credence to the mysterious dogma, the multitude could not fail to regard with increased reverence the men privileged to administer so tremendous a rite—to transform material substances into the very body and blood of God. The ceremonies attendant on the Host awed the worshippers, and, amid tinkling bells, waving

incense, and prostrate crowds, reasoning, educated men yielded their better judgment at the shrine of superstition, and followed the unthinking mass in adoring this last and cleverest device of priestcraft.

Ceremony is another powerful agent, which, in all ages and parts of the world, has been employed in connection with religions which will not bear investigation, in order to hoodwink the multitude, and exalt the ecclesiastical order. Just as the despotic governments of Europe encourage the people to indulge immoderately in trifling amusements, in order to prevent them thinking seriously on political affairs, the dignitaries of false faiths treat their votaries to a perpetual round of shows and festivals, dazzling the senses at the expense of the reasoning powers. This trick is practised successfully by Buddhists as well as Roman Catholics; you may see it played off with similar efficacy in Benares and Pekin. The priests who exercise a craft, not a holy vocation, have generally—

“Confessions to listen,
And bells to christen,
And altars and dolls to dress;
And fools to coax,
And sinners to hoax,
And beads and bones to bless;
And great pardons to sell,
For those who pay well,
And small ones for those who pay less.”

“While the fostering care of the emperors,” says Mosheim, “sought to advance the Christian religion, the indiscreet piety of the bishops obstructed its true nature, and oppressed its energies by the multiplica-

tion of rites and ceremonies. They introduced, with but slight alterations, into the Christian worship, those rites and institutions by which formerly the Greeks and Romans, and other nations, had manifested their reverence towards their imaginary deities, supposing that the people would more readily embrace Christianity, if they perceived the rites handed down to them from their fathers still existing unchanged among the Christians, and perceived that Christ and the martyrs were worshipped in the same manner as formerly their gods were. There was, of course, little difference in these times between the public worship of the Christians and that of the Greeks and Romans. In both alike there were splendid robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, croziers, processions, lustrations, images, golden and silver vases, and innumerable other things." What was true of the fourth century is equally true of the nineteenth. These mummeries of superstition obtain still. Both the Latin and Greek churches take advantage of the general ignorance of their adherents to reconcile them to sacerdotal tyranny by means of imposing rites. Instead of expounding to them the great truths of Christianity, they amuse them with shows, like children at a fair.

"Then ceremony leads her bigots forth,
Prepared to fight for shadows of no worth ;
While truths on which eternal things depend,
Find not, or hardly find, a single friend :
As soldiers watch the signals of command,
They learn to bow, to kneel, to sit, to stand ;
Happy to fill religion's vacant place
With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace.

Stiff in the letter, lax in the design
And import of their oracles divine ;
Their learning legendary, false, absurd,
And yet exalted above God's own word."

Such is Cowper's graphic description of the effects produced by this empty pageantry. It shuts out the true light of Christianity, but materially promotes the designs of priestcraft. No one can have witnessed the ceremonies of Roman Catholicism without being struck with the subordination of the former to the latter in every one of them. The clergy know well how deeply indebted they are to them for their wealth and influence. For the same reason they have resorted to miracles, deceiving the people with all kinds of impositions in this line, and so magnifying their office. What are the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood, the winking Virgin at Rimini, the holy coat of Treves, and all similar exhibitions, but inventions of sacerdotal knavery? So thoroughly has the intellect of the masses been debased in some countries by contrivances of this sort, that the common people of Naples are said to believe nothing in religion but what is incredible, and to place the greatest faith in those saints who perform the most outrageously absurd miracles. This is a notable triumph of priestcraft.

A great proportion of the evils under which European society groans may be traced to the influence which ecclesiastics, by such-like means, have managed to obtain over the public mind. The simple-minded ones, who by their arts have been beguiled and led away from the fountain-head of their faith,

regard them with a blind, superstitious devotion ; those who see the hollowness of that kind of religion, and know no other, regard them in much the same light as the soldiers at Stirling, in the "Lady of the Lake," are represented as looking upon their spiritual advisers :—

"Our vicar thus preaches—and why should he not ?
For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot ;
And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch,
Who infringe the domains of our good mother Church."

One can scarcely exaggerate the disastrous effect of priestcraft, both on those who practise and those who submit to it. The former become deceitful, arrogant, heartless, and despotic ; the latter unmanly, grovelling, helpless, and addicted to slavish fears. Exactly the same consequences follow from the devices of the sacerdotal order among civilized races and savages—in Spain and the South Sea Islands—on the banks of the Ganges and on those of the Danube—in the deserts of Arabia and on the Russian plains. Wherever the laity have deferred and given in to the unscriptural pretensions of the clergy, there you find ignorance, poverty, stagnation of intellect, and the absence of all progress in those things which constitute material prosperity. How many millions, did they but know their real position, could truthfully echo the charge which Sir Walter Scott puts into the mouth of Hugo de Lacy, in the "Betrothed :—" "You of the spirituality make us laymen the packhorses of your own concerns, and climb to ambitious heights by the help of our overburdened shoulders." Who could recognize the faithful, laborious overseers and

pastors described by the Apostle Paul in so many of his epistles in the

"Grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
To their own vile advantages have turn'd
Of lucre and ambition—to themselves appropriating
The spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers ; and, from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power have forced
On every conscience."

In these glowing words of Milton's we have, really, all the philosophy and the theology of the matter. They ought to be written in golden letters on the kaaba at Mecca, on the pagoda of Juggernaut, on the temple of Kounboun, on the church of St. Peter. Our great poet had both studied human nature and read his Bible, in which there is not a syllable warranting this usurpation of authority and dignity on the part of Christian ministers. From the pope to the Puseyite curate, every one of them bears the marks of antichrist. How astonished would the fishermen of Galilee have been could they have witnessed some of the examples of pretension and arrogance on the part of their successors in the pastoral office which have disgraced the Church. Europe has seen, not only without reprehension, but without surprise, a king of England doing penance at the tomb of Thomas à Becket, a king of France holding the stirrup for the bishop of Rome, an emperor of Germany spurned from the pope's castle gates, and suing for pardon in sackcloth and ashes.

During the darkness of the middle ages, prelates became nobles, held lands and towns, and compelled

dukes and counts to serve them. We read of a duke of Brabant, who was carver to the bishop of Utrecht ; of a count of Guelders, who was his hunter ; of a count of Cleves, who was his chamberlain ; of a count de Benthem, who was his janitor ; of a Lord de Cucke, who was his butler ; and of a Lord de Choer, who was his standard-bearer. Following the example of the sovereign pontiff, who claimed a superiority over every crowned head, each ecclesiastical dignitary in his turn asserted a right of precedence over the feudal chieftains around him.

“These men are they who in the name of Christ
Have heap'd up wealth, and arrogating power,
Have made kings kiss their feet, yet call'd themselves
The servants of the servants of the Lord.”

In these times, the laity, being ignorant, were, of necessity, superstitious, and easily persuaded at the instance of a designing class to give up the rights of reason and manhood, and submit to a yoke which the primitive converts would not have borne.

There is a remarkable passage in the third volume of Macaulay's history, with reference to Jeremy Collier, a nonjuring divine, in the time of William III. which affords rather a remarkable illustration of the false light in which Christian ministers were viewed by a certain class of minds in the Church :—
“His brain was almost turned by pride—not personal, but professional. In his view a priest was the highest of human beings, except a bishop. Reverence and submission were due from the best and greatest of the laity to the least respectable of the elergy.

However ridiculous a man in holy orders might make himself, it was impiety to laugh at him. So nervously sensitive, indeed, was Collier on this point, that he thought it profane to throw any reflection even on the ministers of false religions. He laid it down as a rule, that muftis and augurs ought always to be mentioned with respect. He blamed Dryden for sneering at the Hierophants of Apis. He praised Racine for giving dignity to a priest of Baal. He praised Corneille for not bringing that learned and reverend divine Tiresias on the stage in the tragedy of 'Œdipus.' Indeed, his Jacobitism was little more than one of the forms in which his zeal for the dignity of his profession manifested itself. He abhorred the revolution less as a rising-up of subjects against their king, than as a rising-up of the laity against the sacerdotal caste."

Matters have, no doubt, undergone a great change for the better, since what Isaac Taylor calls "the dog-days of spiritual despotism;" but the same pretensions are still made, although in a modified form, and with a sort of apology, implying that the spirit of the times rejects them, and that the day for insisting upon them has gone by. If, however, the clerical order is less arrogant, it may be questioned if the hierarchy are less addicted to luxury and splendour. Palaces and costly carriages, and retinues of servants, are difficult to reconcile with that simplicity which good taste suggests, and the apostles commend. They are remnants of a corrupted Christianity, of centuries when there were not sufficient independence and enlightenment left in Europe to contend against the arts of

priestcraft. Bishops may no longer defy the temporal power, and exercise dominion over conscience, life, and property; but they still answer to the title of My Lord, and are in the receipt of immense revenues. We hear no longer of such tables as those presided over by abbots of old; but surely there are still an unnecessary and undesirable profusion and sumptuousness.

In all priest-ridden countries, too, we find ecclesiastics far too numerous—like the standing armies of modern Europe, eating into the very vitals of the state. M. Huc tells us, that the lamas of Tartary compose one-third of the population. Perhaps the reverend gentleman could also inform us how many clergymen of his own Church, regular and secular, there are in Spain and Italy, the majority of them living in idleness, and, in order to retain their influence, practising all kinds of pious frauds on the people.

The Society of Jesus has been one of the most notable and successful inventions of priestcraft. It came to the aid of the sacerdotal power at a most critical moment,—when the Reformation in Germany had shattered the Papacy, and when the hold it possessed over the people in all other lands seemed fast loosening. The work begun in the crypt of the church of Montmartre did much to counteract that originated in the convent at Erfurth. Roman Catholicism owes a deep debt of gratitude to the enthusiasm, skill, perseverance, and courage of Ignatius Loyola. In a very few years, his agents had penetrated into every European court, crossed every sea, attempted at least

to influence every family whose support was valuable, and, above all, got into their own hands the education of half the youth in Christendom. The design was boldly conceived; its execution excites our highest admiration. No doubt it proved a deadly blow to freedom of thought and action in religious matters; but the ecclesiastical orders even now remain incalculable gainers from the early efforts of the Jesuits. The thirteenth rule in their "Spiritual Exercises" aptly illustrates not only the weapons with which they fought, but the foundation of deceit on which all priestcraft rests. It runs as follows: "In order that we may be altogether in conformity with the Catholic Church, and of the same mind, we should hold ourselves ready, if in any instance she has pronounced that to be black which to our eyes appears white, to declare that it is so." Shakspeare puts a similar sentiment into the mouth of Pandulph, in "King John." Addressing King Philip, he says:—

"O let thy vow
First made to Heaven, first be to Heaven perform'd;
That is, to be the champion of our Church!
What since thou swearest, is sworn against thyself,
And may not be perform'd by thyself:
For that, which thou hast sworn to do amiss,
Is not amiss, when it is truly done;
And being not done, where doing tends to ill
The truth is then most done not doing it.
The better act of purposes mistook
Is to mistake again; though indirect,
Yet indirection thereby grows direct,
And falsehood falsehood cures."

Such doctrine cuts up by the roots all morality, yet it

underlies all priestly power. Were everything in the Church real, true, above-board, and free from deceptive tricks, mankind would undoubtedly be better, but the craft would also lose great part of their influence by the improvement.

If that influence has been disastrous to the cause of virtue, it has been no less so to that of knowledge. For more than seven hundred years, it shut out from Europe all light whatever; and as soon as learning revived, it received a shock from which recovery is happily impossible. Whoever doubts the intimate connection between sacerdotal authority and ignorance of the deepest type, should go to Naples. In Spain, Portugal, and the mountainous provinces of Austria, in various regions of the East—across the Atlantic, in Mexico, and the Spanish Main—you find them twin sisters, marring the fair face of nature, and brutalizing men created in the image of God. Wherever a people are enlightened, they discover the imposture played upon them. The best antidote to sacerdotal usurpation is the circulation of the Bible in the vernacular. No nation thoroughly imbued with divine truth, derived, not through secondary channels, but from the fountain-head, is likely to submit to the pretensions of priestcraft. Since the French seized upon Tahiti, they have contrived to seduce many of the islanders from the paths of virtue; but so well had the Protestant missionaries instructed the natives in the Holy Scriptures, that none of them could be induced to embrace Roman Catholicism.

Nor does priestcraft subserve the cause of law and order. Political tyranny, it is admitted, lies under

unspeakable obligations to it. The two go hand and hand together, working diligently and harmoniously to maintain among the masses that tranquillity which results from ignorance and debasement, and which, when once disturbed, leads directly to carnage and crime. But in free countries, how often have ecclesiastics instigated their hearers to deeds of violence and then obstructed the execution of the laws? How frequently in Ireland, for example, have murders followed immediately denunciations from the altars, and juries refused to convict where the clearest evidence of the crime was laid before them? Is not the clergyman who denounced as much the murderer as the dastardly villain who pulled the trigger behind a hedge? And yet, where is the body of their fellow-religionists who would dare to bring in so righteous a verdict? By such means capital and energy, improvement and skill, are driven from the country; fertile plains remain uncultivated, like the Pampas; manufactures scarcely exist, and commerce languishes. What a different aspect might that beautiful island present but for priestcraft!

What enormous evils too have been produced by the acquisition of property, especially landed, by ecclesiastical bodies! Almost every Roman Catholic nation has been compelled to pass laws checking the tendency on the part of the Church to absorb the possession of the soil. If a proprietor lay on his deathbed, priests were sure to be near him, urging him to atone for his many transgressions by making over his substance for pious purposes. Those who yielded to such solicitations were held up to the people as

saints ; the refractory were threatened with a terrible continuance of purgatorial fires.

“Thy father was wise, and his treasure hath given,
That the priests of a chantry might hymn him to heaven.”

We all know the deplorable state of the Spanish American republics. Perhaps the following passage from the work of Mr. Squier, United States minister to Nicaragua, may throw some light on the causes of the poverty, misery, and anarchy which there prevail:—“Amongst the sources of revenue to which the priesthood has adhered with greatest tenacity, is what is called the *capellania*, or lien on property, conveyed to the priests by proprietors at their death, to secure certain masses or other priestly interpositions on behalf of their souls, or conveyed to churches for the same laudable objects. Thus, Don Fulano, finding his end approaching, gives to his priest a lien of twenty dollars a year on his estate, in consideration of which a certain number of masses shall be said for him annually. Next year the Doña Fulano dies, and, not to be outdone in piety, she secures to her favourite church another annual sum to be invested for the glorification of her protecting Santa and the benefit of her own ‘*alma*.’ It will readily be seen that the continuance of this process through a series of years, must, in the end, seriously embarrass the real estate of the country, and prove an effectual check to the improvement of that species of property. Thus, the most desirable portions of Leon, once covered with squares of palaces, are now waste and unoccupied, in consequence of the accumulation

of the capellanias, which exceed in amount the market value of the ground."

It is almost unnecessary to remark that priestcraft and political liberty are specially antagonistic. Wherever the one waxes, the other wanes. Countries have obtained the inestimable blessing of civil freedom just in proportion to the degree in which they have shaken themselves free from ecclesiastical domination. England waged a long and fierce contest with sacerdotal power. She triumphed, and, perhaps, by so doing, saved herself from falling as low as Spain or Portugal. The Scandinavian nations early achieved a similar victory, and their reward has been an independence of thought and action unknown in France or Austria. In the United States the clergy have little or no influence beyond their own proper sphere; in Mexico and South America, they intrude with most disastrous effect into state affairs. True liberty is altogether inconsistent with ghostly usurpation. The arts of the confessor degrade the mind; the claims of the priests prevent the assertion of the rights of manhood; persons trusting to others and deferring to unfounded pretensions, lose their self-reliance and become unfit for political action. No one acquainted with the present state of Northern and Central Italy can shut his eyes to the fact, that the leaders of the work of emancipation there are men who have lost their faith in the papacy and their blind devotion to the clerical order, and that wherever the priests still retain their ancient power, there the people are least prepared to exercise intelligently their privileges as citizens of a free state.

The sacerdotal body always allies itself with despotism, unless when it finds it necessary, on an emergency, to dissemble for a time, and get quit of disagreeable consequences by feigning an unnatural love for liberty. It ought, therefore, to be the first care of every wise statesman and every free people, to guard diligently against encroachments from this quarter, to avoid the very appearance of governing or being governed by means of the clergy, and to acknowledge them in no other light than as simple members of the body politic—servants of One whose kingdom *is* not of this world, and *has* suffered less real injury from the attacks of infidels than from the devices and tricks and pretensions of priestcraft.

NARROWMINDEDNESS.

IN one of that splendid series of works whose prefaces bear the now happily well-known impress of "Stanford Rivers," we read as follows—"The human mind is prone to rest within the circle of a single order of sentiments familiar to it." This is peculiarly true of inferior intellects. They look only at isolated facts, at single events, at one-sided aspects and partial results, without regard to general principles, or effects distant yet of universal application.

To think comprehensively one must possess the power of abstraction, else present appearances are certain to lead astray, and a determination to bring every position to the test of calm reason, else prejudice will infallibly, though perhaps almost imperceptibly, step in to influence and injure the process. No writer, in our time, has done more in this respect for the cause of truth, or dealt a heavier blow to narrowmindedness, than Isaac Taylor. No one has with greater success attempted to force young inquiring spirits beyond that magic circle and to give them habits of independent

thought. He whose analytic faculty has been fully developed, and who has been trained to a severe and unyielding logic, finds it, even should he be a man of vigorous understanding, not a little difficult to emancipate himself from that contracted sphere in which, from education or partiality, or some other cause, his reason has hitherto alone acted. We cannot, therefore, wonder that the great mass of mankind never seriously make the trial, but confine their conceptions, without a struggle, within the limits of their mental Goswell Street. They see men of no ordinary capacity doing the same—men of brilliant abilities saying things which betoken a narrowness of spirit in them well nigh incredible, and in such good company they are content to hold on their way, however closely hemmed in by thorny hedges. The view may be magnificent on the other side; they may know it, but they prefer the customary to the newly-opened path, and rather than take a little trouble, or do violence to a cherished notion, they lose the glorious prospect of the world around.

In the case of weak minds, this contraction arises from want of capacity to extend their survey or regard two objects at the same time, especially in connection with each other, to trace their relationships, to look upwards from effect to cause, or downwards from cause to effect. In the case of minds of a higher order, it arises from indolence or prejudice, not unfrequently from pride, often from all three combined, acting and reacting upon each other. The man of talent and strong will, naturally tends to dogmatism;—self-confidence, particularly when to some

extent well grounded, almost necessarily limits the intellectual range. We see this exemplified every day by distinguished statesmen, who, trusting, reasonably enough, to their great experience, knowledge of character, and acquaintance with political economy, but having imbibed and long advocated certain principles, cannot be brought to recognize truths patent to the mass of their fellow-subjects. The very strength of their mental powers proves a snare to them, depriving them of that docility without which there cannot be comprehensiveness of thinking. The same thing may be said of authors. Their obstinacy and pugnacity have become proverbial. The quarrels of eminent literary men are chiefly remarkable for being about mere trifles, and being carried on with almost incredible acerbity. To them with special propriety may be applied the lines of Chatterton—

“What strange infatuations rule mankind !
How narrow are our prospects, how confined !
With universal vanity possess’d,
We fondly think our own ideas best ;
Our tott’ring arguments are ever strong ;
We’re always self-sufficient in the wrong.”

It is curious to watch the various forms which narrowmindedness assumes; to note its multitudinous phases, to study its different sources and trace its development. The rustic follows his plough, or prunes his hedge, without ever giving himself the trouble of inquiring into the reason of things, scarcely conscious of the Providential arrangements,—of the wonderful adaptation and harmony,—of the perfect beauty of those works of the Creator by which he is surrounded ;

his faculties lying dormant, except so far as they are required for the supply of his bodily wants, the curiosities of nature exciting no ambition or desire of knowledge in his brain. Dr. Livingstone, in that admirable sketch of his earlier life which prefaces his book of African travels, narrates the following anecdote:—“It is impossible to describe the delight and wonder with which I began to collect the shells found in the carboniferous limestone which crops out in High Blantyre and Cambuslang. A quarryman, seeing a little boy so engaged, looked with that pitying eye which the benevolent assume when viewing the insane, addressing him with, ‘However did these shells come into these rocks?’ I received the damping reply, ‘When God made the rocks, He made the shells in them.’” The less information we have, the less we desire to add to it; in proportion to our intellectual cultivation will be our indisposition to rest satisfied within the limits of any one class of opinions, or any peculiar modes of thought.

Want of employment is another fertile source of mental contraction. The majority of idle men think little, and their thoughts are generally confined in very small compass. “The prejudices of Sir Geoffrey Peveril,” says Sir W. Scott, “were both deep and envenomed, as those of country gentlemen often become, who, having little to do or think of, are but too apt to spend their time in nursing and cherishing petty causes of wrath against their next neighbours.”* The description is equally true of most persons who

* “Peveril of the Peak,” vol. i. p. 227.

have not acquired the love of reading and study when young, and who, in later life, retire out of the busy world with a fortune ample enough to enable them to indulge in mental and bodily repose. Their minds become crabbed, and opiniativeness grows on them apace. Like Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, as immortalized in Dryden's verse, they are invariably stiff in opinions—always in the wrong." Finding it unnecessary to exercise their faculties, in order to retain or advance their position in society, thinking gradually becomes a trouble to them, and of logical, comprehensive thinking they soon lose all conception.

Then there is the individual whose whole soul is devoted to some particular profession or pursuit. One not unfrequently meets a merchant who can speak of nothing but his goods, and who, if candid, would confess that he thinks about them every day and all the day long, Sunday and during divine service included, and dreams about them, in addition, many a night. He may not be a poor man who requires to work hard for his family, nor a silly man whom love of literature, or science, or country can scarcely be expected to arouse; but merely an ardent man, who has got so engrossed in trade as to have become essentially narrowminded. "Triptolemus Yellowley," we are told in the "Pirate," "thought of the battle of Pharsalia, not as it affected the freedom of the world, but dwelt on the rich crop which the Emathian fields were likely to produce next season." One constantly meets with similar gentlemen in general society, and laments that their ideas should flow only in one channel, while the whole domain of

Nature was at their command. Perhaps professional men are still more addicted to this exclusiveness than agriculturists or traders. Sheridan thus wittily caricatures it in his farce of "St. Patrick's Day:"—

"*Dr. Rosy.* Oh, poor Dolly! I shall never see her like again; such an arm for a bandage—veins that seemed to invite the lancet. Then her skin, smooth and white as a gallipot; her mouth as round and not larger than the mouth of a penny phial; her lips conserve of her roses; and then her teeth—none of your sturdy fixtures—ache as they would, it was but a small pull, and out they came. I believe I have drawn half a score of her poor dear pearls Mental accomplishments!—she would have stuffed an alligator or pickled a lizard with any apothecary's wife in the kingdom."

Narrowness of mind frequently manifests itself in a most unreasonable hatred towards religion and religious professors. No Jesuit or grand-inquisitor has ever been more fanatical against Protestants than certain persons arrogating to themselves the title of philosophers have been against zealous Christians. They can give them credit for no virtue; they rail and rave at their ministers, as if the clergyman's gown were of necessity a cloak for dishonesty; they refuse to admit any of the benefits conferred by members of the clerical order on the human race; and, by harping continually on this string, they seem to have reasoned themselves into a belief that there is no sincerity either in morals or in faith. It may be said that such men are actuated by passion or unhallowed prejudice; and no doubt this to a large extent is the case; but

we have all heard similar sentiments expressed by persons whose knowledge is so limited, and whose reflective and argumentative powers are so deficient, that they have not been able to distinguish between sincere belief and hypocrisy, or to dissociate true religion from its semblance and counterfeit. It requires no great penetration to convince every one that the fault lies in the imperfection or defective cultivation of their own understanding, and not in the character of the individuals whom they misrepresent and defame.

Nothing has a greater tendency to weaken and contract the mental vision than the continual pursuit of one idea. Into this error solitary men are prone to fall. In private, and without contradiction, they meditate upon and cherish their favourite notion till it fills their mind and expels all other trains of thought. "A fixed idea," says Longfellow,* "is like the watchman's wife in the tower of Waiblingen, who grew to such a size, that she could not get down the narrow staircase; and when her husband died, his successor was forced to marry the fat widow in the tower."

This frailty sadly impairs the reasoning faculty, and it shuts out its victim, to a considerable degree, from the world of thought around him. One fears to enter upon a discussion with him, lest inadvertently he should offend the idol. "De gustibus non est disputandum," or, as Tristram Shandy has it, "There is no disputing against hobby-horses." Generally speak-

* "Hyperion," ch. vii.

ing, these fancies are valueless, if not foolish; but even when true and estimable, they ought not to be allowed to take entire possession of the mind. "Il y en a," says Pascal, himself a very correct and profound thinker, "plusieurs qui errent d'autant plus dangereusement, qu'il prennent une vérité pour le principe de leur erreur. Leur faute n'est pas de suivre une fausseté, mais de suivre *une* vérité à l'exclusion d'*une autre*."

No intelligent observer can have mixed much in the society of divines, or other persons fond of ecclesiastical controversy, without being convinced of its tendency to confine our ideas and contract our powers. Neither literature nor religion flourished amid the disputations of churchmen during the earlier centuries of the Christian era; they give rise to much refinement of wit, much hair-splitting, cavilling, verbal criticism, and conflict, but by no means conduce to clear philosophic thought or enlargement of sentiment. "La vérité," says Massillon, in one of his powerful discourses, "n'est pas le fruit des contentions et des disputes." Not that we should be precluded from discussing points of doctrinal difference, but that we should avoid that polemical habit, that love of living in the atmosphere of sectarian religious turmoil, in which some people take particular delight, but which always has a disastrous influence on the intellect. It is necessary at times to defend our principles in regard to creed or church government, as well as in regard to social questions and questions of national politics; but it is not necessary, nor is it desirable, to clothe these subjects

with an exaggerated and factitious importance, and to devote to them any large portion of one's time and thoughts. There is a good deal of truth in a remark made by Benjamin Franklin at the commencement of his autobiography. "I had caught this disputatious spirit," he says, "by reading my father's books of disputes on religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and generally men of all sorts who have been bred at Edinburgh."

The first and most certain result of indulging to excess in this kind of reading, or writing, or oral discussions, is to weaken that charity which is the first of the Christian graces, and totally at variance with narrowmindedness. As the sun, by its light and heat, opens up the flowers, so ought we, reflecting the spirit of our Maker, to look with indulgence on the errors of our fellows. The polemical spirit magnifies points in dispute; the Christian spirit attaches to them that small importance which is generally their due. It directs our attention to the allowance made in the moral government of the universe, for variety of opinions, for intellectual errors and stunted mental growth.

Every mistaken sentiment is not sinful: one may go very far wrong in doctrinal matters without deserving severe censure. No man has any right to be so confident in his own opinions as to indulge in anger or scurrility with reference to the opinions of others. Even heathen writers have often enforced this truth. There is, for example, a striking exposition of it in the second book of Seneca's treatise "*De Ira*:" "*Illud potius cogitabis,*" writes the Roman

sage, "non esse irascendum erroribus. Quid enim, si quis irascatur in tenebris parum vestigia certaponentibus? Quid si quis surdis, imperia non exaudientibus? Quid si pueris, quod neglecto dispectu officiorum, ad lusus et eneptos æqualium jocos spectent? Quid si illis irasci velis, quæ ægrotant, senescunt, fatigantur? Inter cætera mortalitatis incommoda, et hæc est, caligo mentium; nec tantum necessitas errandi sed errorum amor. Ne singulis irascaris, universis ignoscendum; generi humano venia tribuenda est."

The polemical spirit is as alien from true charity as it is from true philosophy, and exercises a cramping, contracting influence upon the human mind. Dandie Dinmont made a remark of general import, and which might be profitably studied by many whose intellectual and moral range has been narrowed by ecclesiastical strife, when he said to his guest—"After a', there's baith gude and ill about the gipsies; they're warst where they're warst guided."

This brings us directly to the consideration of that inordinate attachment to a religious denomination which is one of the most frequent and most offensive manifestations of a contracted mind. There is no kind of bigotry more intolerable or inexcusable than that of those people who act as if they thought—if they do not actually think—that the slightest deviation from what they believe to be orthodox in doctrine or church government, removes others beyond the pale of salvation. Their very appearance repels one. Hard, uncommunicative, severe—humility on their tongue, spiritual pride in their heart—they leave the impres-

sion of having, by means of exclusively meditating on a single class of subjects, and viewing them always from the same side, convinced themselves that they are special favourites of the Almighty; and chosen depositaries of His will. In their looks you read self-confidence and self-righteousness. Whatever they may say in opposition to the idea of particular revelation, you can only account for their conduct by supposing that, secretly, they cherish a belief in themselves having been chosen subjects for it. Yet much of their spiritual tyranny may arise from mere ignorance—ignorance both of their own mental constitution and of the attributes which distinguish the righteous Governor of the universe.

By limiting our thoughts to one sphere, we soon see nothing good beyond it, and regard with feelings either of anger or of pity those whose habits, or education, or intellectual idiosyncrasy, have led them to adopt different views. Enlarged minds entertain far more tolerant sentiments: in the course of their wide survey they meet with much to humble, and to encourage distrust in their own judgment, as well as to convince them how very little, after all, they really know. Sectarian bigotry, indeed, springs quite as frequently, if not more so, from a censorious, proud spirit, as from an excess of conscientiousness or an over-zealous advocacy of truth. When a man allows his thoughts to centre upon the advantages of some denominational peculiarities, he runs the risk of imagining himself and his friends to be nearer God than others, and is apt to affect a superciliousness very repugnant to the true spirit of Christianity.

From the tone and conversation of some Protestants, we should be warranted in accusing them of assuming to themselves that infallibility of which they have such a just abhorrence when claimed by the Church of Rome. Their theology is by no means the same as that inculcated by one who was meek and lowly, and loved even his enemies; in the words of a distinguished living divine, it is "a dogma with a worm in its heart." The specialities of their own little sect occupy their minds, to the exclusion of the noble and influential truths which they hold in common with all good men; their contracted souls have no room for those enlarged ideas and universal sympathies which characterized such a man as the apostle Paul; they are perpetually confounding denominational peculiarities with the great principles of our common faith, and therefore endeavouring to cure men by stirring up the muddy waters of polemical controversy instead of pouring on them the oil of charity and love. "Oh, what are the things we fight for," says Leighton, "compared with the great things of God!" True religion and undefiled is not confined within the boundaries of any of those ecclesiastical circles formed by man; the visible church never was and never can be united; ours is not a faith of absolute conformity or ceremonial observance; but one which overleaps all the enclosures of sect, and leavens the earth in a great variety of forms. Fenelons have breathed new life around the altars of the papacy; men of noble purpose and unaffected piety have prevented American rationalism, degenerating by rapid steps into Pantheistic infidelity. There is a

pleasing tradition concerning the apostle John, to the effect that when very old and unable to preach, he used to be carried into the Christian assemblies, Sunday after Sunday, and say—"Children, love one another." When Frederick Perthes, the well-known Protestant German publisher, was on his deathbed, his Roman Catholic acquaintance Schlegel wrote him in the following beautiful language: "Failing a personal interview, let us shake hands as Christians and friends, over the small stream that separates us. Who knows how soon the flowers of the world's new spring-time, and the palm-trees of eternal peace in heaven, may grow over and hide that too." Our Puritan and Covenanting forefathers have laid us under great obligation; they did much for the cause of civil and religious liberty; they were men of whom their generation was not worthy; the blame of a great part of their eccentricity and dogmatism, and uncharitableness, lies at the door of their enemies and persecutors; still we must lament the injury which their faults did to the cause of religion, and we can have no toleration in these enlightened days, for men who, like Master Nehemiah Solsgrace, must end every prayer by petitioning for deliverance from popery, prelacy, and Peveril of the Peak. Apart from the laxity, or rather the ambiguity of sentiment in Pope's "Universal Prayer," we should all endeavour to cultivate the spirit breathed in that poem, and instead of rendering our religion unpleasing and unpopular, by assuming an attitude of superior knowledge or sanctity, sincerely offer up the petition—

"Let not this weak, unknowing hand,
Presume Thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land,
On each I judge Thy foe.
If I am right, Thy grace impart,
Still in the right to stay ;
If I am wrong, oh teach my heart
To find that better way."

Nothing can be more unlovely than this contracted sectarian devotion. Originating in the absence of enlarged views and comprehensive thought, it soon allies itself to error, pride, and selfishness, a union fatal to mental progress and damaging to piety. Nor does this exclusiveness characterize individuals only ; it distinguishes ecclesiastical societies as well. Archbishop Tennyson said, that " the narrow notions of all churches had been their ruin ;" and no man of really liberal sentiments can be connected with any of our religious denominations, without having occasion to mourn over their departure in many respects from true catholicity. There are those who have reasoned themselves into the belief that there can be no salvation out of the pale of episcopacy, and who, by meditating continually on apostolic succession and " the church," have had their very nature changed, their—

"Spirit nursed
In blind Infallibility's embrace."

There are those who, in the nineteenth century, hold to the Solemn League and Covenant, and talk of all not inclined to subscribe it as "malignants." Too many of the smaller ecclesiastical bodies in

Protestant countries have allowed their attachment to a party to overshadow their zeal for truth, and answer the description in Hudibras of

“A sect, whose chief devotion lies
In old, perverse antipathies.”

It has been so in all ages. In the fourth century the Rogations maintained that when Christ came down to judge the world he would find true religion confined to a few small villages in Mauritania. In our own times we see a handful of people meeting in some British or American room, setting up a shibboleth of their own in place of the great doctrines of Christianity, and assuming a high-flown appellation indicating that wisdom exists only with them.

Narrowmindedness among our church organizations, taken either individually or collectively, manifests itself in an undue and excessive veneration for forms and rituals and ceremonies, and peculiarities in administration and observances, which may or may not be expedient and convenient, but have nothing whatever to do with the one thing needful. Not one of our denominations is free from it. You find it on the episcopal bench, in the Presbyterian synod, in the weekly meetings of Independents, on both sides of the Atlantic, connected with all varieties of doctrinal sentiment.

Much injury has been done to the cause of Christianity by the inflexibility of theologians. Mistaking theories of their own for divine revelation; indulging in hasty assertion, fierce dispute, and

metaphysical wrangling; regarding words instead of things, and elevating into cardinal principles matters of no moment and concern,—they have wasted time and talents which might have been usefully employed in advancing the cause of virtue and piety. In the discussion of minor differences they have forgotten both charity and magnanimity, opened up fresh sources of strife and irritation, confused their own understandings, and perplexed and offended others. A man may be very orthodox yet very cold; he may speculate with mental exactitude and shrewdness without practising active benevolence. We should see not only that our positions have been well chosen, but that we act from them with effect against the enemy. There are two kinds of allies whose assistance no general would desire to have—those who boast of their power and discipline but never put them to the test, and those who are fonder of displaying their prowess in tilts with their friends than in combats with the foe. The German divines of the sixteenth century, by their vehement disputations about trifles, paved the way for the reaction which the Jesuits were at hand to foster and spread. Deeply disastrous, in ten thousand ways, have been the consequences of good men refusing to unbend in matters where no vital principle was involved. Some carry this intolerance so far as to insist upon all Christians in certain circumstances using a particular form of words. There were persons in England who doubted the piety of Dr. Arnold because he did not happen, when on his death-bed, to profess his

belief in the doctrine of justification by faith. The history of Christianity affords far too much excuse for Gibbon's taunt, that "the road to Paradise is over a bridge as sharp as a razor." Among the early believers, and among ourselves, in Asia Minor as well as in Great Britain, the stern pertinacious obstinacy displayed by polemics in magnifying slight varieties of sentiment and putting questions of modes of expression and ecclesiastical government on a level with the sublime verities of our faith, has been to the world at large "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Constantine, desirous of peace and uniformity in the church, had a conference with a Novatian bishop, who, he thought, might be of assistance in carrying out his views; but so impracticable did the emperor find the prelate, that he dismissed him with the remark, "Set up a ladder, Acesius, and climb up to heaven by yourself."

We read in the "Heart of Mid-Lothian," that in Mr. Middleburgh's opinion, Johnny Dodds of Farthing's Acre, and David Deans of St. Leonard's, imagined themselves to constitute the only members of the true, real, unsophisticated Kirk of Scotland; and Dr. Chalmers used to tell a story of "an elderly gentleman who was fully persuaded that true Christianity was exclusively to be found in himself and an old wife. When the old lady died, the universal church was restricted to his single person." To such ridiculous extremes may even worthy people be carried who confine their mental exercise within the limits of a few eccentric notions, and cut themselves off from

fellowship, or even communication, with the great mass of mankind. Human nature is full of self-sufficiency. "There are," Sir Walter Scott makes King James say in the "Fortunes of Nigel," "Puritans of papistical principles—it is just a new tout on an auld horn." Men of this stamp are not only very exclusive, but they advocate their peculiar views with a rancour and bitterness that would be laughable were it not sad to contemplate. We all revere the memory of Melancthon. He was in one sense the father of the reformed theology in Germany, having tutored and trained an army of divines to defend the doctrines of Protestantism. Skilled controversialists, formidable adversaries, learned teachers many of them became; but few, if any, shared the enlarged and comprehensive views of their master; and by the very men who were indebted to him for all their advantages, he was assailed, vilified, and abused on account of some doctrinal differences, as if he had been a heathen and a reprobate. From their violence and animosity he longed to take refuge beyond the river of the shadow of death. At last the desired-for hour approached. When near his end, addressing his soul, he said, "Thou wilt enter into glory; thou wilt be delivered from all thy tribulations, and from the implacable hate of theologians."

A large proportion of these controversies arise, moreover, about the merest trifles. It is deplorable to see men of talents and strong will becoming acrimonious and excited in regard to church government, or doctrines of secondary importance; how much more

deplorable is it to see them beating the air, by mixing up conscience with the veriest frivolities under the sun. Is it not enough to bring that sacred word into disrepute, to render it a byword and a reproach on the streets and in the market-place? The sight of "infinitely little minds," to use the expressive words of Dr. Arnold, "disputing about anise and cumin, when heaven and earth are coming together around them," encourages sceptical and wicked men to deny the very existence of sound principle. In the third century, there arose a lively dispute in the Christian church, as to whether the Paschal Fast should end and the rejoicings begin in the evening, or at the very moment of cock-crowing. About the year 1023, France was convulsed with the question, whether Martial, the first bishop of Limoges, ought in the public prayers to be reckoned among the apostles or among the professors. And, in our own day, it is quite common to see divines range themselves on sides, and hurl the most formidable bolts against each other, when the difference between them, after all, resolves itself into a mere affair of verbal interpretation or misconception of meaning. Drs. Chalmers and Stuart met one day in Edinburgh, and had a long and eager conversation on saving faith. "Street after street was paced," relates the biographer of the former, "and argument after argument was vigorously plied. At last, however, his time or his patience exhausted, Dr. Chalmers broke up the interview; but, as at parting he shook by the hand the amiable though somewhat pertinacious controversialist, he said, 'If

you wish to see my views stated clearly and distinctly, read a tract called "Hindrances to believing the Gospel." 'Why,' said Dr. Stuart, 'that's the very tract I published myself.' No one familiar with the doctrinal controversies which have been carried on within the last half-century in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, especially with that in regard to the atonement, will be disposed to deny that in many instances the combatants had argued themselves into believing in a difference which really had no existence at all. It is very much to be questioned if volumes of reasoning on abstruse matters of this kind do any good whatever. There is, perhaps, a growing sentiment that they are productive of positive harm. This wrangling about trifles is not confined to Christianity, or even to religious affairs. The Mahomedan world has long been divided by the feud between the followers of Abubeker, Othman and Omar, and the adherents of Ali, the Somnites and the Shiites. And both in literature and science the most astonishing clamour is ever and anon raised about some affair of the smallest possible consequence.

The connection between Church and State, whatever may be its advantages, certainly tends to aggravate the narrowmindedness of sectarianism. The churchman looks down on the dissenter, and scarcely thinks of him as a Christian; the dissenter regards the churchman with that bitterness which a sense of injustice never fails to create. In many parts of England, to such a pitiable extent do educated persons carry this bigotry, that they will not associate with,

and scarcely deign to speak to, any one who objects to church establishments, and does not believe in episcopacy. An orthodox country gentleman would be perfectly shocked were he to find himself in a room with an Independent or a Baptist; his contracted soul cannot tell you why a man should be refused admittance into society, because he prefers one form of church government to another; but so it is. The alliance between one ecclesiastical party and the State has brought about and cemented a sentiment in this respect which it is difficult to know whether most to lament or despise. In the United States of America, where no body of religionists has been unduly elevated above the rest, the *odium theologicum* lacks this element of bitterness. In Great Britain let us hope that a healthier and worthier feeling begins to prevail, even in districts where the squire and the parson have hitherto monopolized the gentility if not the enlightenment. Another manifestation of religious narrowmindedness, more or less common, especially in England, merits a passing remark. It takes the shape of modern theological follies—sentimentalities which draw after them half-educated curates and nervous ladies. At one time it appears in the form of wild, impracticable millenarianism; at another, an astonished public beholds it assume the attitude of an almost idolatrous veneration for Jews, and a decided leaning towards circumcision.

Before concluding, it may be necessary to put in a caveat against latitudinarian indifference. There are men making great pretensions to philosophy, who,

without any sincere convictions of their own, think that all religions are very much alike, and would have been apt scholars in that Alexandrian seminary of the second century, where Ammonius Laccas "undertook, by allegorizing and subtilizing various fables and systems, to make up a coalition of all sects, and taught his followers to look on Jew, Philosopher, vulgar Pagan, and Christian as all of the same creed."* They deny any connection between doctrine and practice; under the garb of moderation, they teach scepticism; if you scan closely their views, you will find them considerably more impregnated with self-sufficiency and cant than those of the enthusiasts whom they profess to pity; and not unfrequently you discover them suspiciously allied with Romanism, defending that venerable superstition, which they know prevents the mass of the people from becoming religiously educated and intelligent. Among the papers of Chatterton preserved in the British Museum is the following document, which might form an appropriate confession of faith for this party:—

"The articles of the belief of me, Thomas Chatterton:—

"That God being incomprehensible, it is not required of us to know the mysteries of the Trinity.

"That it matters not whether a man is a Pagan, Turk, Jew, or Christian, if he acts according to the religion he professes.

"That if a man leads a good moral life, he is a Christian.

* Milner, Cent. 2, c. ix.

“That the stage is the best school of morality ; and
“That the Church of Rome (some tricks of priest-craft excepted) is certainly the true church.”

These philosophers boast of their tolerant spirit, and accuse Christianity of being exclusive, reviving, in fact, the accusation of Tacitus, who called the new religion a pernicious superstition, and taxed its votaries with hatred of the human race. In terse and appropriate terms have they been answered by two profound thinkers—the one an ancient, the other a modern. “The true religion,” said Cicero, “can be but one ; all others must be false.” “Equal neglect,” says Burke, “is not impartial kindness. The species of benevolence which arises from contempt is no true charity. There are in England abundance of men who tolerate in the true spirit of toleration. They think the dogmas of religion, though in different degrees, are all of moment ; and that amongst them there is, as amongst all things of value, a just ground of preference.”

Between that fashionable latitudinarianism which pretends to philosophy, and dogmatic sectarian bigotry, there is a golden and an easily discovered mean. The extremes are so widely separate that one requires no great acuteness or ability to find a path approaching neither. It is the same with respect to literature, politics, and social science. We should continually endeavour to give our minds a wider range, to prevent them resting in familiar ideas, to shake them free from that narrowness which leads directly to more serious and active evils than mere mistaken notions, and

which in ten thousand instances has been attended with consequences disastrous to the human race. The thoughtful and candid man contemplates with horror the miseries which the world has suffered at the hands of contracted zeal. Let us hope that with the march of knowledge, liberality of sentiment will keep pace ; and that as men become better acquainted with the mysteries of nature, and more versed in science and art, they will be less disposed to submit their intellects to the yoke of pride, prejudice, and all uncharitableness.

NATIONAL ARMAMENTS.

IN the early ages of the world's history, thousands of years before man appeared, war existed among the creatures of God. We find some of the fishes of the pre-Adamite formations furnished with formidable weapons in the shape of spines and stings; the primæval mammals display tusks and claws of alarming strength; while the weaker living things, belonging to the same period, seem, from the specimens existing in the rocks, to have worn defensive armour, very various in form, but all contrived with wonderful skill for the purpose of resisting prowling foes. The tribes of earth and sea, it is certain, then fought against and tortured each other as they do now. The economy of the universe in this respect appears to have undergone no change. The strong preyed on the less powerful; the violent and their victims lived in juxtaposition.

One must go back farther than the records of geology to discover a time of perfect peace, distinguished by no suffering, outrage, or death. Warfare apparently harmonizes with the course and order

of nature, however much at variance with our moral sense. But few examples occur of fowls, fishes, or quadrupeds, *of the same species*, destroying and devouring each other. That amusement the lords of creation reserve to themselves.

“The hunting tribes of air and earth
Respect the brethren of their birth ;
Nature, who loves the claim of kind,
Less cruel chase to each assign'd.
The falcon, poised on soaring wing,
Watches the wild duck by the spring ;
The slow-hound wakes the fox's lair ;
The greyhound presses on the hare ;
The eagle pounces on the lamb ;
The wolf devours the fleecy dam :
Even tiger fell, and sullen bear,
Their likeness and their lineage spare,
Man only mars kind Nature's plan,
And turns the fierce pursuit on man ;
Plying war's desultory trade,
Incursion, flight, and ambuscade,
Since Nimrod, Cush's mighty son,
At first the bloody game begun !”

In every age, and among all nations, it is easy to excite a military spirit, to fan the flames of civil or international discord, to gain for the conqueror the highest niche in the temple of fame. Napoleon called the British a nation of shopkeepers—meaning, it may be inferred, that either they were indisposed to, or unfit for, fighting purposes ; whereas, all campaigns and quarrels in which we have been engaged, both before and after Waterloo, conclusively prove that there is not in all this wide world a more pugnacious animal, or one who admires and honours more lavishly

soldierly renown, than an Englishman. In these qualities, he differs but little from the North American Indian or the Polynesian savage. Mankind in general are prone, not only to esteem bravery and applaud patriotic heroes, but to crown with laurels mere ambitious conquerors, and in their comparative estimate of great deeds, to forget that

"Peace hath her victories,
No less renown'd than war."

The knowledge that martial achievements command a readier and a more splendid reward than triumphs in other vocations, has a tendency, moreover, to withdraw the talents of men from pursuits in which they could be rendered useful to their fellows, in order that they may be employed in subjugating kingdoms and adding to the woes of humanity. Trajan was a wise and magnanimous prince, who might have done much to consolidate the Roman empire and benefit his subjects, if not to avert the calamities of succeeding reigns; but, unfortunately, the eulogies so freely passed on Alexander the Great, induced him to attempt to rival that warrior, and to devote to military expeditions abilities which might have been turned to good account in the better government of his own dominions. All nations, whether barbarian or civilized, pagan or Christian, resemble too much the Alani, who, Gibbon says, considered war and rapine as the pleasure and the glory of mankind. A naked scimitar, fixed in the ground, was the only object of their religious worship; the scalps of their enemies formed the costly trappings of their horses; and they viewed

with pity and contempt the pusillanimous warriors who patiently expected the infirmities of age, and the tortures of lingering disease. To most minds there must appear no little incongruity in the practice of blessing arms often to be used for the purpose of oppressing and scourging the human race. Even in countries where more enlightened sentiments prevail, a religious ceremony accompanies the presentation of colours to a regiment, and it may fairly be questioned how far such a custom is warranted, or, at least, how far its universal and indiscriminate adoption should be encouraged under a religion of peace and good-will. So wide-spread and so strong is the passion for martial glory, that mankind have, in a great measure, failed to read aright the moral presented by the fates of many a conqueror, and many a gallant host. Victories and triumphal processions inflame the imagination, and live in the memory of succeeding generations, who forget disaster, destitution, disease, and death. How many Frenchmen of the millions whose eyes kindle as you speak of Marengo and Austerlitz, ever bestow a thought on the carnage of Borodino, or the sufferings endured by their countrymen during the retreat from Moscow? Yet attention cannot be too frequently, or too seriously, turned to the cruelties, miseries, and slaughter, necessarily attendant on national hostilities. "War's a rough trade," wisely remarked Edie Ochiltree, "sweet to them that never tried it." The Aztec god of war, we are told, is a very hideous image, with features suggestive of rapacity and every horrible passion, four open mouths, and projecting tongues. Does not its

extreme repulsiveness truthfully describe the idea personified? Can any one who has heart to sympathize with woe, traverse a battle-field covered with dead and dying, visit the homes of desolated relations, walk the neighbouring hospitals, or wander over the ravaged fields, without confessing that neither hurricanes, nor eruptions, nor earthquakes, have ever accomplished one tenth part as much in the work of destroying and rendering wretched the human family? Four millions three hundred and forty seven thousand persons are said to have fallen at the sieges of the three capitals of Khorasan, by Zingis Khan. Timour marked his progress by pyramids of human heads. Fifty thousand men perished in the dreadful battle of Eylau. The harrowing narratives of Magenta and Solferino are fresh in the recollection of us all.

In his little poem on "The Arsenal at Springfield," Longfellow beautifully gives expression to the Christian view of war. Poets of other countries have vividly described the battle-field. I select two passages, one from Tasso's "Gerusalemme Liberata :"—

"Giace il cavallo al suo signore appresso ;
Giace il compagno appo il compagno estinto :
Giace il nemico appo il nemico ; e spesso
Sul morto il vivo, il vincitor sul vinto,
Non v' è silenzio, e non v' è grido espresso ;
Ma odi un non so che roco ed indistinto,
Fremiti di furor, mormori d' ira,
Gemiti di chi langue e di chi spera."

The other from Southey's "Roderick :"—

"Or who endure to hear the tale of rage,
Hatred, madness, and despair, and fear,

Horror, and wounds, and agony, and death,
The cries, the blasphemies, the shrieks, the groans,
And prayers, which mingled with the din of arms,
In one wild uproar of terrific sounds."

"We now feel," writes Mr. Larpent, Judge Advocate-General to the British forces during the Peninsular war, "the effects of our work through these valleys. We cannot ride a few miles without the alternate smells, which succeed each other, of dead horses, dead mules, and dead men. A nice judge can tell each by their particular *goût*; and that of men is much the strongest." The romance of war is one thing, its reality quite another. Those at a distance from its horrible scenes naturally regard it in a very different light from those who have been eye-witnesses of the suffering and havoc which it causes. Sir Walter Scott writes from the field of Waterloo—

"Here might the hideous face of war be seen,
Stripp'd of all pomp, adornment, and disguise."

We have heard of more exalted personages having been unmanned and sickened by the sights witnessed at Solferino.

Then how lamentable have been the miseries and evils, of a social nature, to which ruptures between nations give rise. Much of the wretchedness and poverty which prevail in the world, may be laid to their door. That energy, time, and money, which ought, and probably would, have been devoted to the amelioration of society, have been expended in fruitless combats. Amidst the noise of contending hosts, appeals on behalf of efforts to elevate masses sunk

in semi-barbarism, though living within the sound of church bells, were made in vain. Public interest was, and, even in the nineteenth century, too often is, concentrated on armies, while festering sores are permitted to eat into the very vitals of the commonwealth. The military spirit checks improvement and national reformation, while its more direct and immediate influence on the prosperity of a people, must fill every benevolent mind with sadness. There are three sentences in the recently-published "Life of George Stephenson," the inventor of the railroad system, which contain a moral of the highest moment: every statesman, every young man in Great Britain should lay it well to heart. "In 1807-8, during the great war, incomes of £50 per annum were taxed 10 per cent.; the forces of the United Kingdom were 700,000 men, and one seventh person in England was a pauper; there being 1,234,000 paupers to 7,636,000 persons not paupers." . . . "All Stephenson's hard earnings had to be expended in paying a militiaman to serve for him. He was almost in despair, and contemplated the idea of leaving the country and emigrating to the United States." Such a statement requires no comment,—it could only be weakened by it. The bare fact here recited is worth a thousand peace-society speeches, and speaks trumpet-tongued in favour of national policy of a conciliatory, pacific, and neighbourly nature. But if a country, not itself the scene of hostilities, thus suffers, how much more disastrous effects must follow in countries on whose soil such quarrels are decided. There are towns in Spain still half in ruins, just as they were left by the

French forces fifty years ago ; and Italy owes not a little of her degradation to having been chosen as the arena on which the nations of Europe contended for mastery. Again and again have France and Austria desolated her fair fields, overturned her monuments, and made her rivers run with blood ; rude men from the banks of the Rhine and the Ebro have encamped among her glorious ruins, and even Russian uniforms have been seen on the sunny side of her mountain barrier ;—scarce a city but has been sacked, scarce a district but has been devastated with fire and sword.

But of all kinds of warfare, civil war is the most dreadful to contemplate, the most destructive to the best interests of a people, the most revolting to our sense of what is right and humane and natural. It is, says Pascal, "*le plus grand des maux.*" It has been aptly compared to an exhaustive fever, defying remedy ; while foreign war is only the intense heat of a summer day. "I am one of those," writes the Duke of Wellington in his despatches, "who have probably passed a longer period of my life engaged in war than most men, and principally in civil war ; and I must say this, that if I could avoid, by any sacrifice whatever, even one month of civil war in the country to which I was attached, I would sacrifice my life in order to do it. I say there is nothing which destroys property, eats up prosperity by the roots, and demoralizes the character, to the degree that civil war does : in such a crisis the hand of man is raised against his neighbour, against his brother, and against his father ; servant betrays master, and the whole scene ends in confusion and devastation." Truer testimony war

never given, and the witness is unexceptionable. How have Spain and Portugal, France and Italy, suffered by the intestine feuds of their rulers and people. From the same cause every one of the Spanish republics in South America is more or less in a state of anarchy and demoralization, fatal to progress ; while pronunciamientos have rendered Mexico a byword to all nations.

If civil war is the most injurious, purely aggressive war is the most indefensible. What difference is there between the man who waylays and murders his neighbour, to steal his purse, and the man who does so to obtain his territory, or to gratify mere lust of conquest, or desire of military glory ?

Not only are such attacks immoral and criminal, but in many instances they have scarcely had a pretext or excuse. Nations, like schoolboys, feeling pugnaciously inclined, manage to pick a quarrel, although no rational ground of complaint exists ; passions of cupidity, ambition, and licentiousness are immediately aroused ; and even men of whom better things might have been expected, come forward to

“ Cry ‘ Havock,’ and let slip the dogs of war.”

Bitter and barren have wars of this kind generally been,—ruinous to the conquered, fruitless to the conquerors, disastrous to both. Begun without a reason, many of them have ended without a result. There is much wisdom and philosophy in Southey’s verses :

“ ‘ It was the English,’ Kaspar cried,
‘ Who put the French to rout ;

But what they fought each other for
I could not well make out.
But everybody said, 'quoth he,
'That 'twas a famous victory.'

And everybody praised the duke,
Who this great fight did win.
'But what good came of it at last ?'
Quoth little Peterkin.
'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he,
'But 'twas a famous victory.'"

As the world grows wiser and better, all who aid and abet in mere offensive warfare, will be more and more regarded as a sort of pirates and robbers, whom it would be well for civilization to hang on the nearest tree. Neither the aggrandisement of a monarch, nor the talents of a general, should be permitted to palliate the heinousness of their crime. The only description of hostilities which the Christian is not required to denounce and condemn, is that which can be justified on strictly defensive grounds. The danger may not in every instance be equally proximate and imminent, but it must have an undoubted existence. In cases like that of Switzerland, the alternative was either to submit to a tyranny which made life insupportable, lose every vestige of nationality, and stoop to political slavery, or to defend by arms their rights and freedom. In the case of William the Third's great contest with France, not the rulers, but the people of England and Holland, felt that, had Louis XIV. not been resisted by force, every valued privilege which they possessed would have been in jeopardy. For that reason they cheerfully submitted to unusual bu-

dens, and heartily supported a policy which they believed necessary for the eventual preservation of their national liberties. In defence of their homes, history tells how much men have done and dared ; and the general conscience of mankind applauds the appeal to arms in such a cause. How many patriot bands have there been answering to the description given of David's Gadites by the sacred writer,—men "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and as swift as the roes upon the mountains." How severe and unnatural would be the code which blamed the Greeks for fighting at Marathon, the Swiss at Morgarten, the Americans at Bunker's Hill, the Scotch at Bannockburn !

Such struggles—as indeed all wars—ought to be carried on with vigour and determination. Vacillating counsels, a hesitating course, only prolong and increase the inevitable miseries produced by hostilities. If a resort to arms can be justified, they should be used with unfaltering energy ; far better make peace, even on bad terms, than continue a timidly-conducted and languishing war.

There are some facts connected with military matters which rather puzzle the ordinary reader of history. It will suffice to mention two, without attempting an explanation, or venturing a commentary. The first is, the comparative frequency with which veteran officers, trained to their profession from their earliest years, have been out-mancœuvred, out-generalled, and beaten by civilians, who had hastily been called to take up the sword. Who of Charles's commanders

! a chance with Hampden or Cromwell? How

poor a figure did the British leaders in the American war cut by the side of Gates and Washington. The other circumstance is, the success which has usually attended allied armies. One would suppose that troops of the same nation, speaking the same language, actuated by the same feelings, disciplined in the same manner, having the same customs, sentiments, and prejudices, would, other things being equal, easily triumph over a host composed of various kindreds, tribes, and tongues. Yet Hannibal's heterogeneous multitude conquered at Cannæ the united Romans. The battle of Blenheim was won by half a dozen different armies acting together under Marlborough's command; and we know that they were not all British regiments who fought on the victorious side at Waterloo. Spanish, Portuguese, and English, under the same standards, drove the French over the Pyrenees; it was one allied force which inflicted on Napoleon his great check at Leipsic, another which captured Sebastopol, and a third which, at Magenta and Solferino, broke the back of the Austrian power in Italy.

In the earlier ages of the world's history, all men were, and among nations barbarous, or only semi-civilized, even now they are warriors; but increased luxury and refinement have introduced, at a more recent period, a fighting class, who are paid by the majority of the people to defend them, and who make a profession of arms. Regular troops date their origin from an ordinance of Charles VII., king of France, in the year 1444. It was a wise and popular measure at the time,—wise on the part of the monarch,

because it deprived the nobles of that feudal military power which they had so often exercised to the prejudice of the royal authority, — popular with the people, because it relieved them, to a considerable extent, from an onerous service; and it can scarcely be doubted, that, in all circumstances, it is the cheapest and most efficacious mode of providing for the national defence. Industry suffers less by withdrawing from it altogether a limited number of men, than by calling out the whole male population of a certain age for drill and exercise in the field during a portion of the year. Those who do not feel convinced of this, ought to read Mr. Laing's masterly account of the oppressive Landwehr system in Prussia, and Cowper's kindred remarks in the "Task," beginning,—

" 'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class,"

and ending

" To be a pest where he was useful once,
Are his sole aim and all his glory now."

Of course there is a very wide distinction between a compulsory militia of this description, to form which the entire youth of a country are taken away from their trades and employments during the very years most valuable for learning their business, and volunteer corps, by means of which can be trained to the use of the rifle or other arms those classes who are not likely, in any capacity, to join the ranks of the line. The former act as an incubus and heavy drag on the material prosperity of a nation; the latter have been

found of great service in the hour of need. The one system obtains favour among a castle-building, theoretical people like the Germans; the other commends itself to the judgment of the more practical citizens of the United States.

But whilst a moderate standing army is certainly preferable to a system of universal soldiership, there is great danger of its numbers being so increased as to threaten the very foundations of stability in the state. Some European governments in the nineteenth century permanently maintain forces rivalling the immense temporary levies of which we read in the Old Testament, or the hordes who fought six or seven hundred years ago on the plains of Tartary. Zingis and his sons commanded, it is said, seven hundred thousand Moguls; and Gibbon tells us that in one battle, near the Jaxartes, a hundred and sixty thousand of the Sultan's men were slain. In modern warfare, no such incredible numbers meet in conflict; but when we consider that the armies in our days are a standing force,—servants of the Crown in constant pay,—we must admit their excessive disproportion, as well to the populations of the various countries which sustain them as to the purposes for which they are required. In the palmiest days of imperial Rome, the entire establishment, including marines, consisted, at the utmost, of four hundred and fifty thousand men, or about the same number as that now maintained by that province of the empire then called Gaul. Austria supports more than half a million; Russia probably two or three hundred thousand more; and every petty principality, from Prussia

down to German duchies which we scarcely know by name, groans under an equally burdensome and enormous military force. Upwards of four millions of men are at this moment taken away from commerce and agriculture in Europe to be put in uniform, in order that despotism may be safe and ambition fortified. Such a state of things cannot fail to strike every thoughtful mind as fraught with imminent danger to the cause of peace, civilization, and liberty.

We may profitably consider the tendency of this system of gigantic armaments in various lights. In the first place, it is plunging every nation of Christendom into an ocean of debt, and threatening a general bankruptcy of states. Most revolutions may be traced to excessive taxation, caused by wasteful expenditure; and surely it requires no superhuman sagacity to discern a coming storm in this direction. Every government must of necessity, under all circumstances, guard against putting its hands too often in the pockets of the individual; and when it does so for the purpose of keeping up a useless pageantry, or a force not called for by the exigencies of the public service, it may lay its account with dissatisfaction eventuating in anarchy and bloodshed. The candle, too, burns at both ends; for while, as Burke says, public debts, by their excess, are becoming the means of subverting order and tranquillity, the tax-payer feels the drain upon him too grievous to be borne; the nation drifts into insolvency, the citizen into discontent.

We and our neighbours, to speak proudly, are

“Like monarchs, ruin’d with expensive war.”

There is a sentence in Mr. Wright's "England under the House of Hanover," descriptive of public feeling a century ago, which our statesmen would do well to ponder now, if they desire to save our country from that abyss which yawns across the downward path of our continental friends. "The unusually large expenditure of the last few years," he remarks, "and the consequent increase of the national debt and of the taxation of the country, began now to excite loud complaints, and associations were formed throughout England with the object of opposing the extravagance of the government, and obtaining a reform in the parliamentary representation, the corruptions of which people began to look upon as one of the principal causes of the evils under which they suffered." This vigilance on the part of the people of Great Britain in former times was not exercised in vain. May no foolish panic or unworthy suspicions, or selfish misrepresentations, lull it to sleep in our day!

Then let us keep in view the effect of huge standing armies on industry. Armies have been defined as "vast masses of men who ought to be engaged in productive labour, grievously misemployed." You can scarcely open a book of history or travels without finding illustrations of this remark. With reference to Louis the Fourteenth's campaign of 1693, Macaulay says:—"The preparations of France had been such as amazed even those who estimated most highly her resources and the abilities of her rulers. Both her agriculture and her commerce were suffering. The vineyards of Burgundy, the interminable cornfields of the Beauce, had failed to yield their increase; the looms of Lyons

were silent; and the merchant-ships were rotting in the harbour of Marseilles." "Louis had determined to put forth the whole strength of his realm. A mighty effort, in truth, it was, but too exhausting to be repeated." It seems nowadays the fashion to make similar efforts even without a collision. The armed peace of the nineteenth century is as exhaustive and injurious as the wars of the seventeenth. One may say of almost every European sovereign what Coleridge makes Questenbergh say to Isolani, in the times of Wallenstein and the Thirty Years' War:—

"The peasants fill
With profitable industry the purse;
The soldiers are well skill'd to empty it.
The sword has made the emperor poor; the plough
Must reinvigorate his resources."

Mr. Spencer, in his "Tour through France and Italy," animadverts on "the large standing armies undermining the resources of their respective states." In Egypt there are whole districts uncultivated, on account of their population having been drained off by the conscription. In Tunis, a lady traveller tells us "the Bey wastes his time, as well as his means, upon his soldiers, who are like scorpions in his hand to lash his subjects." Everywhere the complaint is the same—science, art, inventive genius, industrial and moral progress, restrained and weighed down by excessive standing armies.

"This sword of ours is no plough or spade,
You cannot delve or reap with the iron blade."

Armies are useful when moderate in numbers and kept up to protect industry; they become worse than useless when felt as a burden on the persons or purses of the people, and maintained to bolster up a tyrannical government or promote schemes of conquest. They lie as a grievous load on every European country, from the Ural mountains to the Atlantic; they exercise a retarding influence upon civilization, difficult to exaggerate;—Christian philanthropy staggers beneath their weight. How much good might be done among the European masses by expending for their enlightenment, their temporal and spiritual benefit, one tithe of the money thrown away each year by cabinets on uniforms and implements of war! The moral tendency, too, of these immense forces is bad—bad at all times, worse in times of peace. During a campaign, the soldiery find real work to do; in its absence every one knows, not only how prone they are to indulge in vicious practices, but how frequently they corrupt a whole neighbourhood. Deprived of the comforts of home, of the advice of kindred, of fireside friendships and womanly sympathy, they live in an atmosphere not conducive to morality, and soon get their consciences deadened by companionship in sin. It requires no ordinary courage to resist the temptations, to brave the sneer of the barrack. The Christian soldier is a hero indeed.

In considering the dangerous consequences likely to flow from the maintenance of excessive permanent forces, the mind naturally reverts to their adverse influence on the cause of liberty. Many times has the English Parliament listened to eloquent

Warham wrote of Henry the Eighth's designs on France, "should be more chargeful than profitable, and the keeping thereof much more chargeful than the winning."

Immense standing armies are a perpetual source of uneasiness both to the countries which pay them and to their neighbours. What material difference is there between the Tartar and Mogul hordes, whom the plains of Northern Asia could not support, and who, therefore, poured down like an avalanche on the civilization of Rome and Constantinople, and the more disciplined arrays of our own times, who must be let loose upon adjoining kingdoms, else they revolutionize their own? Are not the latter, as the former were, pests to humanity? Do they not disgrace the enlightenment of the age? If the sovereigns of Europe would agree to reduce their armaments to one third or one fourth their present dimensions, they would confer upon their people a boon scarcely to be overestimated, and give an impetus to industrial skill, science, and thought, such as has not been witnessed since the revival of letters. No nation can make rapid strides in material or moral prosperity, which supports in armed idleness one thirtieth of its male inhabitants.

Of late years, the art of war has undergone a complete revolution. Formerly, numbers constituted strength; battles were decided by brute force, and nerve and sinew changed the fortunes of nations; but now we may lay much more store on inventive genius, and the command of money. Sidney Smith said that "the warlike power of every country depends on their three per cents.;" and certainly Russia, with her mil-

lions and her poverty, could have no chance in a prolonged contest with England and her wealth. We possess an equal, if not a superior advantage, in our mechanical skill. As long as we lead the way with Enfield rifles, Armstrong guns, and "Great Easterns," we need be under no great uneasiness because other countries have double our number of rank and file. As steam has superseded sails, so will science render obsolete the old appliances of fighting men; and the most valuable officer in the next generation is likely to be, not he who can bravely walk up to the cannon's mouth, or handle a vast army to best advantage on the field, but he who in his workshop can devise the deadliest implement of destruction. The deadliest, too, it is probable, will be the dearest, which only rich and prosperous nations can command. In our industrial prosperity, therefore, consists our national strength; and if by excessive taxation, in order to augment the mere number of our troops, we impair it, the consequences, it requires no diviner to foresee, cannot fail to be disastrous. The same objection applies to any extensive system of fortification. Time was when no true Briton would for a moment have thought of building a great wall like that of China round his sea-girt isle. Fruitful in resources, relying on united action, possessed of an unconquered fleet, he despised your Wilkin Flammocks, who commended themselves to cross-bows and well victualled castles, if they must needs fight at all. It is a poor sign of a nation's spirit, and a proof of incipient decadence, when driven to trust to forts. Montesquieu observes, that Justinian's empire was like France in the time

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION.

NOTHING can be more natural than that earnest, but narrow-minded and imperfectly-educated men, should become so wedded to and engrossed with their own peculiar views, as to regard any opposition to them as a resistance to acknowledged truth. From the stand-point of their own information and feelings, they cannot conceive of conscientious difference of opinion, and being ignorant of man's mental nature, as well as of the vast variety of so-called accidents which tend to the formation of sentiments in the human mind, they set down their belief as undoubted verity, and accuse those who do not see eye to eye with them of moral criminality. By a process equally natural, they persuade themselves that conduct so blameworthy should not go unpunished. Exclusiveness must ever be closely allied with penalties; ignorance is the fruitful source of persecution. Had men studied each other more, how many martyrs might have gone down quietly to their graves! Had presumptuous, feeble mortals looked a little beyond the

contracted limits of their own circle of thoughts, how many wars and butcheries and massacres might have been spared! Profound thinkers and extensive observers have not only to note but to make allowance for the thousand and one causes of error ever rising up in the way of even the sincere inquirer after right; and, while humbly thankful for the clearness of vision granted to themselves, they are warned more and more impressively, the longer they continue their investigations, not to judge harshly of others, however much they may deem them mistaken, or however dangerous they may consider the tendency of their views. The man, on the other hand, who possesses neither general knowledge of his fellows, nor the spirit of true philosophy, shuts himself up in his own infallibility—

“And therefore seeks he in his brother’s sight
To cast the mote; and therefore strives to bind,
With his strong chains, to earth what is not earth’s—the
mind.”

It must not, however, be supposed that none but ignorant and narrow-minded men have been guilty of persecuting others for conscience’ sake. All history refutes such a notion; the principle seems so ingrained in human nature, that intellects of great power and comprehensiveness have adopted it as in a manner undisputed, and without scruple carried it into practice. “Sir,” said Dr. Johnson, “the only method by which religious truth can be accomplished is by martyrdom. The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks; and he who is conscious of

the truth has a right to suffer. I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth but by persecution on the one hand, and enduring it on the other." We all know that for his age, Pliny was neither an under-educated nor a cruel man. Yet, when governor of Bithynia, we find him writing thus to the Emperor Trajan:—"With regard to those who were brought before me as Christians, I followed this method. I asked them whether they were Christians; to those who confessed themselves to be so, I put the question a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persevered I ordered to be led out to execution." Yet these and other memorable instances of individuals of great reputation for enlightenment and abilities, sanctioning the exercise of religious tyranny, only illustrate how very imperfectly informed even the leaders of mankind are. They may have been distinguished orators, writers, statesmen, warriors, scholars, and philosophers; but they were ignorant of man's rights and mental constitution, of the true meaning of worship, and the limits of the sphere of government. While on many questions they had acquired a vast fund of knowledge, on these they were as yet but babes. The first lessons had not been taught them; their ideas were on a level with those of the barbarous nations around. Dr. Livingstone tells us concerning the Bechuana chief Sechele:—"Seeing me anxious that his people should believe the words of Christ, he once said: 'Do you imagine that these people will ever believe by your merely talking to them? I can make them do nothing except by

thrashing them; and if you like I shall call my head men, and with our whips of rhinoceros hide we will soon make them all believe together.' ” This may sound a little ludicrous in civilized ears; but wherein does the theory of the semi-savage African ruler differ from that which up to a comparatively recent date was almost universally accepted in Christendom, which even now governs the policy of half the European thrones. Sechele would have been a fit instrument to carry out the views of cabinets, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and French, and of every prelate who acknowledges the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. Nor have there been wanting reformers in Church and State, Protestants and Republicans, who durst not consistently have cast the first stone at him. It is curious and melancholy to observe how few there have been in any age possessed of clearer light, and ready to protest against any interference on the part of civil or ecclesiastical power with man's conscience. The multitude, as well as their leaders, have always shown themselves eager

“To preach the Gospel with a drum,
And for convincing overcome.”

Yet religious tyranny, so far from deriving any encouragement from the New Testament, does violence to the whole spirit and scope of those doctrines which our Saviour Himself, His apostles and evangelists proclaimed. The fathers and early teachers of the Church expressly abjured it. “It is,” says Tertulian, “one of the rights of man, and belongs to the natural freedom of every one, to worship according

to his convictions ; and the religion of one can neither injure nor profit others. But it is not religion to employ force in religion ; for religion must be voluntary, and received without compulsion. Sacrifices are desired only from free hearts." With other corruptions in teaching and practice, however, the principle of persecution gradually crept into the Christian Church ; and when the new faith found its way into the palace of the Cæsars, when Constantine established it on the ruins of Rome's ancient paganism, it lost still more of its pristine purity, and became very much an engine of state.

The governments of the old world were no more friendly to freedom of any kind than are many governments in the present day ; and their alliance with Christianity tended, little by little, to wean the affections of bishops and people from that broad and noble principle which had so eloquent a defender in the presbyter of Carthage. History abounds in examples of highly-cultivated men who have failed to understand the rights of conscience.

One or two instances, more remarkable still, occur of men comparatively uncivilized and ignorant, who did homage to the cause of religious liberty. Few who have read can ever forget Gibbon's description of the policy of Zingis Khan. The Mogul emperor could neither read nor write ; he had around him no well read, enlightened advisers ; yet what says the historian of him. "The Catholic inquisitors of Europe, who defended nonsense by cruelty, might have been confounded by the example of a barbarian, who anticipated the lessons of philosophy, and

established by his laws a system of perfect toleration. The Tartars and Moguls were addicted to the idols peculiar to their tribes; and many of them had been converted by the foreign missionaries to the religions of Moses, of Mahomet, and of Christ. His own first and only article of faith was the existence of one God. These various systems in freedom and concord were taught and practised within the precincts of the same camp; and the Bonze, the Imam, the Rabbi, the Nestorian, and the Latin priest, enjoyed the same honourable exemption from service and tribute. In the mosck of Bochara the insolent victor might trample the Koran under his horses' feet, but the calm legislator respected the prophets and pontiffs of the most hostile sects."

Volumes might be filled with an account of the various persecutions which have disgraced the Christian Church, to say nothing of other religions. We all know the avowed policy of the Mahomedan armies, their alternative of conversion to the faith of Islam or death. We have read with burning indignation the sufferings of the early believers under Nero, Domitian, and Pagan emperors of like mind with them; and missionary records from all parts of the heathen world have borne testimony to us of the horrible cruelties everywhere practised to bring about religious conformity. It may be more profitable for us to confine our present glance to the tyrannical doings of Christians towards one another, and towards that ancient people, who, notwithstanding their unbelief and hardness of heart, have so many claims on our respect and gratitude. It makes one shudder to think

of the fines, banishments, imprisonments, and torments in former times, and of the penal enactments and disqualifications, at more recent periods, endured by the Jews at the hands of those who profess to be followers of Him whose mission to earth was one of peace and goodwill; and when we read of wholesale massacres of that nation, without cause or reason, we are tempted to wonder that God did not signally interpose to put an end to such gratuitous and unprovoked oppression.

We are told that in the archbishopric of Seville alone, between the years 1483 and 1520, no fewer than one hundred thousand Jews received, between imprisonment, confiscation, banishment, torture, and death, what the Papal historian calls the just sentence of heretics. In many other parts of Europe, the Hebrews were treated in a similarly barbarous manner, every variety of enormity being committed on their persons and estates in the name of our most holy faith. Zeal for the truth was the nominal, avarice and a savage love of blood were the real motives of those who thus disgraced Christianity. The forsaken race were not allowed to mingle with their fellow-men in society; they were compelled to inhabit separate quarters of the cities; they were hooted and pelted on the streets; every now and then they had to hand over their gains to their ruthless tyrants. In times of tumult they were the first to experience popular violence; at all times they were regarded as fair game, and compelled to submit to every species of indignity. It could scarcely be otherwise during the palmy days of the Romish Church;

for although the leaders of that great system of ecclesiastical domination have frequently, and of late years especially, in order to serve political ends, allied themselves with liberalism, it can only be with a mental reservation, and on the principle of doing evil that good may follow ; because their whole structure is founded on exclusiveness, which tolerates no dissent and necessitates persecution. Wherever the Papacy is dominant, there never has been, never can be, religious liberty. The two theories are antagonistic. Erasmus conveyed volumes of truth in his withering joke, that he hoped Lollardism would cease before winter, as it raised the price of firewood so much. Could any Church, but one based on spiritual despotism, have established, sanctioned, and worked an institution so thoroughly diabolical as the Inquisition ? Protestants and Pagans have persecuted ; but it was reserved for Roman Catholicism to systematize and refine cruelty. The ministers of this tribunal did not content themselves with murders, however foul ; they invented and gloated over lingering torments, and racked their brains to render human life as loathsome and miserable as possible. When the executioner in "Old Mortality" asked Lauderdale upon which of Macbriar's limbs he should employ his engine, the duke replied : " Let him choose for himself ; I should like to oblige him in anything that is reasonable." Even such small favours no one expected in those horrible dungeons, where the minions of sacerdotal tyranny practised their hellish arts. And the number of their victims was legion. During the first two-and-twenty years of the establishment of the Inqui-

sition in France, the bishops had to memorialize the Pope to arrest the work for a while, as there were not persons enough in the country to provide food or build prisons for the sufferers.

The history of religious persecution in France, generally, is one of deep interest ; its scenes and incidents are peculiarly affecting. Nowhere has the real character of the papal usurpation been more thoroughly unmasked and displayed in the face of day. A ferocity distinguished the proceedings of the ecclesiastical power in that land which never got so full a vent in either Germany or England. Danton and Robespierre were guilty of no slaughter to be compared with that which, in the 13th century, deluged the streets of Bezières with the blood of Nonconformists. Francis I., the same who enjoyed the spectacle of burning heretics in Paris, when a younger man, ravaged the fair province of Provence with fire and sword, Herod-like, to prevent the possibility of an opponent of papal pretensions being saved alive. In the wars against the Albigenses, under Simon de Montfort and others, deeds of cruelty were done, over which, for the sake of human nature, the veil should now be drawn. Previous to the awful massacre of St. Bartholomew, Beza complained to the king of outrages committed in thirty towns where, at the instigation of the Duke of Guise, Huguenots had been " stabbed, stoned, beheaded, strangled, burned, buried alive, starved, drowned, suffocated ;" and during that never-to-be-forgotten time of sacerdotal fury and fanatical carnage, what an army of infernal 'rits seemed to have taken possession of the Gallic

plains ! For seven dismal days and nights Paris was converted into a vast charnel-house ; and in the provinces the Duke of Sully computed that 70,000 persons perished ; while so far from mourning over such a saturnalia of evil passions, blood-thirstiness, and brutal revenge, the head of the Catholic Church listened with approbation to Muretus' wretched eulogy on the deed, walked with all his clergy in a solemn procession of thanksgiving for the destruction of so many heretics, and cordially congratulated some of the assassins under the ring of the holy fisherman. Well might a French poet exclaim—

“ *Quel lion, quel tigre égale en cruauté,
Une injuste fureur qu'arme la pitié.*”

Still more heart-rending, if possible, is the story of the persecutions endured by the Vaudois of the Piedmontese valleys, of whom Mrs. Hemans sings :

“ Go, if thou lov'st the soil to tread,
Where man hath nobly striven ;
And life, like incense, hath been shed,
An offering to heaven !

For o'er the snows, and round the pines,
Hath swept a noble flood ;
The nurture of the peasants' vines
Hath been the martyrs' blood !

A spirit, stronger than the sword,
And loftier than despair,
Through all the heroic region poured,
Breathes in the generous air.

A memory clings to every steep,
Of long-enduring faith ;
And the sounding streams glad record keep
Of courage unto death.

Ask of the peasant where his sires
For truth and freedom bled ?
Ask, where were lit the torturing fires,
Where lay the holy dead !

And he will tell thee all around,
On fount, and turf, and stone,
Far as the chamois' foot can bound,
Their ashes have been sown."

But persecution has by no means been confined to the Roman Catholic Church. Notwithstanding its being utterly opposed to the principle on which their faith is based, Protestants have too readily proved themselves apt pupils in the school of spiritual despotism, although, of course, it ill becomes their preceptors to reproach them with such a dereliction of duty. "We must," says Sir James Stephen, in his lectures on the History of France, "be more mythical than Strauss, more sceptical than Whately, if we do not recognize in the Church of Rome the great original, of whom all other persecutors have ever been but timid, feeble, and most imperfect imitators." That there have been such imitators among reformers, nevertheless, we all know. Forgetful of all that they themselves had suffered only a few years before, no sooner had the Whig party in England fairly seated William of Orange on the throne, than they began to plot how they might most effectively oppress their opponents; and so bent were they on measures of cruelty and blood, that they were only saved from committing acts, which would have inevitably been suicidal, by the wise firmness of that great prince himself. No schoolboy need be told who proscribed Servetus; who

lighted the fires of Smithfield for the Anabaptists. Calvin no doubt would have cheerfully gone to the stake for his opinions. Cranmer did go there and die for his, yet both approved the burning of heretics, and long after both of them had departed this life, their Protestant followers considered it a sacred duty to burn and kill their fellows. Few, indeed, of the men in those days, who were loudest in their denunciations of Romish corruption, really understood the basis of Protestantism, or appreciated that doctrine of perfect liberty of conscience, which is the keystone of the Reformation. Nor was it the papal power which drove the Covenanters of Scotland to the mountains, and rooted among the people of that country, a dislike to the episcopal form of church government, which the lapse of centuries has scarcely mitigated, much less removed. Neither was it Rome that oppressed the English Puritans, and compelled so many good and righteous men to seek refuge, first in Holland, afterwards in America. If Mary was bloody, Elizabeth was persecuting. No British sovereign in those times professed to respect the principle of religious liberty; and the national church, broad and comprehensive as it professed to be, and to a certain extent was, scarcely affected a different policy from that which guided the Papacy. "In one respect," says Lord King, in his "Life of Locke," "the Reformation conferred an unmixed benefit; it dispersed the wealth and broke the power of the priesthood. As for toleration, or any true notion of religious liberty, or any general freedom of conscience, we owe them not in the least degree to what is called the

Church of England. On the contrary, we owe all these to the Independents in the time of the Commonwealth, and to Locke, their most illustrious and enlightened disciple."

With all their faults and failings, these men were, indeed, the heroes of the age; their energy, enthusiasm, and firmness of purpose proved the salvation of the cause of truth and freedom in these isles. "Fairly may it be questioned," remarks Isaac Taylor, "whether, if in that long struggle the priest had vanquished, the Puritan England would not have, at this moment, been as Spain." If they did not prevent this country returning to the yoke of Rome, they at least fought manfully against a spiritual despotism as grievous, effectually repelled the encroachments of priestly power, and laid us under a debt of obligation not easy to repay. Yet they were hunted, fined, imprisoned, and banished by fellow-Protestants of their own day; and in ours, to use the graphic words of a divine himself, not a dissenter, but a clergyman of the Church of England, "You will often hear some semi-popish stripling, fresh from Oxford, puffed up with new-fledged views of what he calls 'apostolical succession,' and proud of a little official authority, depreciating and sneering at the Puritans, as men alike destitute of learning and true religion; while, in reality, he is scarcely worthy to sit at their feet, and carry their books."* Advanced, however, as their views were, they came far short of the true idea of religious freedom.

* "Lecture on Baxter and his Times," by the Rev. J. C. Ryle, Rector of Helmingham, Suffolk.

When dominant in Cromwell's time, they showed a disposition to oppress others, and those who emigrated to America, by no means established perfect equality there. Independents, in New England, persecuted Quakers and Anabaptists. In the early history of Massachusetts, every town was forced to support a Congregational minister, whose salary was paid by a tax levied upon all the inhabitants, to whatever sect they belonged; so that Mrs. Hemans indulges in a slight poetical license when she concludes her noble ode on the Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers with the lines—

“They have left *unstain'd* what there they found,
Freedom to worship God.”

To the honour of their descendants it can now, however, be said that the words of the poetess are strictly and literally true.

The frequent use, even nowadays, of the word toleration, shows how deeply seated the principle of spiritual tyranny is in the human mind. Johnson defines it, “allowance given to that which is not approved;” and the employment of it in free countries in this enlightened age, proves how slow men are to learn, that control over religious sentiment or practice is, in reality, quite beyond the province either of the civil magistrate or of any dominant sect. *Ure seca* were the words of a famous Protestant professor in Leyden towards Nonconformists. Lord Macaulay describes Mr. Southey's notion of toleration to be, “that every body is to tolerate him, and that he is to tolerate nobody.” Toleration, indeed! As if every

man had not a right to worship or not to worship as he pleases ; to enjoy absolute equality in point of religious privileges with all others ; to protest against the exaltation of any particular denomination ; to claim the abolition of all adventitious ecclesiastical distinctions, the legacy of the dark ages, the remaining memorials of that principle which kindled the martyrs' fires. When true freedom of conscience becomes fully understood and acted upon, we shall hear no more that odious word used with respect to religious parties or rites. In the United States of America it has already become as obsolete as persecution. There can be no doubt priestcraft and worldly policy have had as much to do with oppression for religious opinions, as evil passions and misguided zeal. We all recollect Milton's fierce denunciation in "Paradise Lost," of—

"Grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of heaven
To their own vile advantages shall turn
Of lucre and ambition." . . . "to themselves appropriating
The spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers ; and, from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience."

What the priest uses to serve his own end the politician uses to serve his ; and it cannot be denied that in some instances their measures have been in the main successful. It is a common saying, and no doubt generally true, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." This, however, has not always been the case. There have been persecutions

so terrible as to crush their victims to powder, to root out dissent, to leave no seeds from which a new crop might spring, to exterminate relentlessly the objects of oppression. Protestantism in France has never recovered the ruthless and continued massacres of former days. The populations of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria proper were brought back to Roman Catholicism by force, and to a great extent remain Roman Catholics still. With regard to the proscriptions in Spain under Philip II., Prescott says :—“Never was there a persecution which did its work more thoroughly. The blood of the martyr is commonly said to be the seed of the church. But the storm of persecution fell as heavily on the Spanish Protestants as it did on the Albigenses in the thirteenth century, blighting every living thing, so that no germ remained for future harvests.” These cases, however, may perhaps be regarded as exceptional, the rule being expressed in the Hudibrastic couplet,—

“That, like the Christian faith, increased
The more, the more they were suppress'd.”

It is undeniable, that after all the efforts of the Inquisition had been used for centuries to annihilate the Waldensian doctrines, nearly a million of persons professed them in Europe before Luther began to hurl his anathemas against the Vatican. Latimer comforted Ridley at the stake at Oxford by prophesy-ing that their martyrdom “would light a candle in England, which should never be put out;” and, undoubtedly, the general effect of such exhibitions has

been to give increased popularity to the cause of the oppressed.

With reference to Wycliffe's remains having been disinterred and burned, and the ashes cast into the Swift, Fuller beautifully remarks :—"The brook did convey his ashes to the Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow seas; they into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wycliffe were the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

It has frequently happened that questions of civil freedom and even national independence have been mixed up with those of religious liberty—that a people have been called on at one and the same time, either to submit to a hateful political yoke, and abjure their cherished faith, or to take up the sword for the defence of their altars and homes. In such cases tyrants, from the son of Constantine downwards, have been made to feel the irresistible force of the united powers; but every careful student of history will admit that the spiritual sentiment is the stronger of the two. At the bidding of conscientious conviction men will do and dare, and suffer, what confounds the politician's plans. The man whose actuating motive is a stern sense of duty, whose eye is fixed on heaven above, who feels his eternal interests at stake, wields a weapon which has already shaken thrones. Death has no terrors for him. He has an armour which even despairing patriots know not of. He stands unawed in the face of kings; his spirit rises with difficulties, and derives courage from restraint; above the smoke and din of battle he sees the chariot

of Israel, and hears the shouts of a delivering host. "Though," said Luther, when dissuaded from attending the Diet, "though they should kindle a fire all the way from Worms to Wittemberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord."

Every one who has studied mankind and read history knows very well how inefficacious, as a general rule, persecution is as a means of putting down opinions commonly regarded as heretical. All experience has proved how sound was the advice given by Gamaliel to the Sanhedrim, with reference to the apostles:—"Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Fifty years ago, in Germany, there was a loud and bitter cry raised against the philosophy of Kant, which having rallied around itself a host of ardent young men, threatened to overwhelm the ancient systems. Herder, Wieland, and others, denounced it in the most vehement language, and hundreds of voices called for the extirpation of the obnoxious theorists. Amid the storm, however, Goethe maintained his composure, and to the advocates of repressive measures his answer was,—“Let the scheme have its day, as all things have.” Whatever partial success may have attended the efforts of tyrants, whose object was to put down truth by the strong arm of power, there can be no doubt of the wisdom of employing an entirely different policy with regard to error. The best way to deprive popular

delusions of their sting is to let them alone; indifference soon weakens the influence of heterodoxy. When a friend of the famous Duke of Queensberry remarked of the attacks made by Paine on religion and the constitution, "They are so false, too."—"No;" replied his grace, "not at all; they are true, and that is their danger, and the reason I desire to put them down by law; were they false, I should not mind them at all." Many almost unknown heresies have been introduced to public notice by, and been indebted for, a measure of temporary popularity to the ill-judged exertions of the orthodox to hunt them down. Persecution only irritates; it does not and cannot convince. You may punish with relentless severity, and by so doing, only render your victim's opinions dearer to him than before. In a thousand instances have the torture, the prison-house, and the lighted faggots rendered wavering believers resolved confessors. The sure method of confirming a man in even the most foolish sentiments, is to attempt to compel his abjuration of them by other means than argument and persuasion. Comparatively little danger need be apprehended from theoretical views, however extravagant, unless they be subjected to undue restraint. Give them free vent, and, like the active volcano, they merely throw up stones into the air; keep them pent up, and, in all probability, they will by some sudden explosion cover fields and villages with a sea of liquid fire.

The instances in which God has made the wrath of man to praise him, by rendering persecutions of true religion conducive to its eventual extension, are a

deeply interesting study. One meets with them in every century of Christianity's history. The exile of Athanasius gave him the opportunity of strengthening, by his advice and his writings, the position of the afflicted Church; the burnings and massacres of Christians, under so many of the later Roman emperors, were followed at no great interval by the establishment of their faith. The cruelties perpetrated by the Church of Rome in England, during the reign of Mary, did more than anything else to build up Protestantism in that land, on a foundation which never can be shaken. But for the most brilliant example of this class of effects, the mind naturally reverts to the United States of America. The very first attempt made to colonize that country was made by Huguenots from France; they were followed by a party of Protestant Walloons, under the guidance of Peter Minnets; an emigration of Scotch Covenanters rendered New Jersey the head-quarters of Presbyterianism at an early date. The landing of the Pilgrim Fathers from the *Mayflower*, on the bleak shores of Cape Cod, their settlement in New England, and the influence of their views of the politics and social state of the new world are familiar to us all, we having lived to see the realization of William Penn's dream, then considered a romantic one—a dream of which he frequently conversed—that a great empire, based on the principle of religious liberty, and free from the formalism of state churches, should one day rise to importance in the western wilderness. More than two thousand miles from Plymouth Rock, as the crow flies towards the setting sun, may the descend-

ants of the Puritans be seen now making that wilderness rejoice and blossom, building houses, and factories, and schools, and churches; they have taken possession of the Pacific coast; serving in a wonderful variety of capacities from Maine to Texas, they cover the Union, and by-and-by we shall hear of them felling the timber on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and bringing the vast prairies of the Upper Missouri under the dominion of the plough.

Very disastrous have been the effects of persecution on industry and national prosperity. Italy and Austria have had great cause to mourn the infatuated policy which drove hundreds of their most enlightened and enterprising citizens to other parts of Europe; and not a few Protestant cities—Zurich, for example—owe much of their wealth and influence to emigrations of this kind. But, perhaps, France has suffered most. Languedoc has never recovered those dismal religious wars, which, no doubt, to a great extent, rooted out what Rome regarded as heretical opinions, but which, at the same time, blighted irrecoverably the fair prospects of that once famous land.

In the year 1560, Coligny appeared at Fontainebleau, and thus addressed the king:—"Having been sent into Normandy by your majesty's order, to inquire into the cause of the troubles there, I beg permission to report, that I have found the first and chief reason of them to be persecution on account of religion." The crowds who were driven beyond the seas and the Rhine by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, carrying their talents and industry, with a sense of wrong, to other states, led even Catholic

counsellors of Louis XIV. to condemn a step so contrary to sound policy, as well as sacred compact. Many times has France been convulsed, its trade injured, its agriculture impeded, the progress of its civilization stopped, by the violent raids of the Romish Church against liberty of conscience.

Equally injurious has its effect been on mind. When men are not permitted freely to exercise the right of private judgment, the tendency is, first, to think only on those subjects which do not concern religion or politics, and then not to think at all. What prevented Spain from emerging, as other nations did, from the gloom of the Middle Ages? Why did the revival of letters stop at the barrier of the Pyrenees? Ask the agents of the Inquisition. When Europe arose out of her long sleep, they succeeded by the frequency and potency of their narcotic doses in prolonging, I might also say, perpetuating the intellectual slumbers of a people who once led the chivalry of Christendom, and who conquered Mexico and Peru. How many provinces of Italy tell a similar tale! Since Sardinia adopted the opposite principle as her rule of action, she has made strides in mental culture and material prosperity which have scarcely been paralleled in our times.

Those desirous of finding something favourable to say of persecution, may urge with truth, that it conduces to the purity of the church. "L'Eglise elle-même," says Massillon, in one of his eloquent sermons, "ne fut jamais plus fervente, et plus pure, que lorsqu'elle fut affligée; les siècles de ses souffrances et de ses persécutions furent les siècles de son éclat et

de son zèle." Established churches rank among their adherents multitudes who in reality have no religion at all; at quiet periods thousands conform to Christianity who are a source rather of weakness than of strength to it; whereas those who adhere to the faith in adversity may be supposed to be persons of sincere conviction and earnest principle. Their support is worth the having. Of such stuff were formed the early missionaries who trod in the footsteps of Paul, and spread the new religion in every country bordering on the Mediterranean, and such were the fathers and martyrs whose sufferings and cruel deaths ended in the imperial establishment of Christianity.

We live in happier times; the old persecuting feeling yet lingers in various forms amongst us, but the diffusion of knowledge has deprived it of its sting, and men are becoming every day more firmly convinced that

"Of all the tyrannies on human kind,
The worst is that which persecutes the mind."

. In this nineteenth century we can scarcely realize the scenes which took place in former ages, especially in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and under the iron despotism of Rome. Yet so it was. Contemplative men and gentle women, deaf to cries for mercy and insensible to emotions of pity, hunted their fellow-beings like partridges on the mountains, enjoyed their writhings on the rack,—greedily shed their blood. Be it ours, thankful for the change which has come over the sentiments of Christendom in this respect, to

lend a helping hand in rooting up all remnants of the old despotic plant, and in cutting away every decaying shattered denizen of the forest, which, pressing upon the majestic tree of religious liberty, prevents it sending forth its branches in all directions, and displaying its foliage to be watered by the dews and brightened by the sunshine of heaven.

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